

INTRODUCTION

Every combat outfit has its heroes, both living and dead, who contributed to the final victory. In a few cases the individuals heroism decided the course of the action. So it was in Headquarters Company, First Battalion, 232d Infantry. But far more often, it was the every day devotion to duty by each man, the team work, the pride in proper performance, and the gifted leadership of the Battalion Commander that made effective our participation in the final victory.

This narrative is the story of the last three months of the war in Europe as seen from the eyes of the enlisted man. The tactics employed, the utilization of forces, the supply of material and other military factors contributing to the success of the fight against the enemy are mentioned only as they are part of the over-all picture as seen through the eyes of the men who participated in the action. Very often the picture seen by the men was a worm's eye picture of the universe of conflict. At other times the purpose of the action was clear to all. This is the story of men and their reaction to their war environment - it is the story of Custer's Red Raiders.

A Medic's Prayer

Christ, O Lord, who on earth didst heal,
Give us now the strength to fight
For brotherhood that men should feel,
The sick to cure, the wrong to right,
Let not our efforts be in vain;
Sustain our courage and our might;
Give strength to those who lie in pain;
To those in darkness send Thy light.
Look down upon their Gethsemane;
Please give them now the strength to bear,
The sorrows, pains and agony,
Of all the things they see and hear.
Grant those of them who die, O Lord,
That by their death the world shall see,
Through light of Faith Thou givest, God,
More clearly what it ought to be.
For us, O Lord, we ask naught more,
Than strength and faith to carry on,
The task that Thou didst choose us for,
To comfort and heal as does Thy Son.

- T/3 Henry A. Nelson
122nd Medical Battalion
Attached to Headquarters Company,
First Battalion, 232d Infantry

ATTACHED MEDICS

James, Alfred D.	S/Sgt	3715 N. W. 8 th St.-Oklahoma City, Okla.
Snyder, Vernon G.	T/3	215 So. Post St.-Spokane, Washington
Nelson, Henry A.	T/3	640 E. Passaic Ave.-Bloomfield, N.J.
Crits, Marvin	T/3	Starkville, Mississippi
Fagala, Norval	T/4	563 San Juan, Texas
Brown, James	T/4	Eagle River, Wisconsin
Somers, Joseph	Cpl	30 Freeman St.-Woodbridge, New Jersey
Simonson, Gene	T/5	3314 Grinnel St.-San Diego, California
Frederick, Willis H.	T/5	Box 56-Port Deposit, Maryland
Harris, William F.	Pfc	1937 Horton Ave S.E.-Grand Rapids, Mich
Lange, Earl	Pfc	1435-A No. 29 th St.-Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Wright, John A.	Pfc	Box 128 - Bakerstown, Pennsylvania
Johnson, Robert M.	Pfc	2701 Rutherford Drive-Hollywood, Calif.
Sheehan, William F.	Pfc	Route #4 - Fulton, Kentucky
Saucedo, Luis	Pfc	Box 628 - EI Compo, Texas
McCracken, Donald G.	Pfc	20 Alfred St. - Pontiac, Michigan
Johnston, Lloyd	Pfc	222 Blaine St - Caldwell, Ohio
Hall, Billy M.	Pfc	809 E. 12 th St. - Ada, Oklahoma
Sheppard, Charles E.	Pfc	Medora, Indiana
Ambrosi, August	Pfc	602 Van Ness - Bronx, N. Y.

Hq Co KILLED IN ACTION

Goverski, Frank J.	S/Sgt	18 January 1945
Vidrino, William	Pvt	17 January 1945
Davis, Dudley L.	Pvt	15 March 1945
Plant, Vernon T.	Pvt	15 March 1945
Jepson, William L.	Pfc	23 April 1945

Hq Co MISSING IN ACTION

Durda, John	Pfc	18 January 1945
Froelich, Mathew C.	T/5	19 January 1945
Fuller, William G., Jr.	Pfc	19 January 1945
McMullen, Joseph B.	Pfc	19 January 1945

HqCoTRANSOUT-WOUNDED

Backett, Donald J.	T/5
Hill, James R.	Pfc

OFFICERS in HQ CO & BN

Brice C. W. CUSTER	Lt. Col.	4215 Mentono St. Culver City, Calif.
John Barrett	Major	
Paul D. Arvin	Capt.	608 W. Lusher, Elkhart, Ind.
Arnold D. Alpert	Capt.	150 Ash St., Denver, Colo.
Stanley, Duffy B.	1st Lt.	1507 W. College Ave., Middleland, Texas
Sawyer, Stillman F.	1st Lt.	
Crane, John	1st Lt.	
Bowers, Wesley C.	1st Lt.	1035 5 th Ave., NY, NY
Allen, Arthur W.	Capt.	630 Oxford Road, Ann Arbor, Mich.
Kidd, Leon Wain	Capt.	
Custer, Robert E.	2 nd Lt.	
Denzen, Elmer J.	2 nd Lt.	
Brice, Emmet W.	2 nd Lt.	
Baum, Richard F.	1st Lt.	
Anschutz, Ralph C.	1st Sgt	Glyndon, Minnesota
Edwards, Raymond L.	T/Sgt	1113 Bannock-Denver, Colorado
Greuel, Gordon A.	S/Sgt	Casselton, North Dakota
Wild, Leo D.	Sgt	RFD #3 - Blissfield, Michigan
Cottle, Oral L.	T/4	RFD #5 Box 132-Manchester, Maine
Beers, John O.	Pfc	62 Wabash Terrace-San Francisco, Calif.
Hodge, Charles C.	Pfc	1275 Airport Rd-RFD#8-Pontiac, Michigan
Hedrick, Paul S. Jr.	Pfc	2440 E. 4 th Place-Tulsa, Oklahoma
Calvert, Erwin O.	Pfc	Box 222-Urbindale, Illinois
Stein, Thomas E. Jr.	Pfc	563 Senator St.-Brooklyn, N. Y.
Ferraro, Joseph S.	T/Sgt	28 Pembroke - Chelsea, Massachusetts
Miller, Michael G.	T/Sgt	1905 Luzerne - Scranton, Pennsylvania
Byrd, Cyril C. Jr.	S/Sgt	615 Fairfax Ave-Bessemer, Alabama
Gravelin, Edward G.	S/Sgt	Box 127 Voluntown, Connecticut
Hersh, Henry A.	S/Sgt	Masonville, Colorado
Jones, Kermit E.	S/Sgt	Box 187-Lexington, Tennessee
Kiolbasa, Raymond J.	S/Sgt	6349 Hyacinth - Chicago, Illinois
Pearl, Abraham	S/Sgt	1362 Grand Concourse-Bronx, N. Y.
Bethell, Henry H.	S/Sgt	3904 Beclear Ave-Austin, Texas
Thomas, Charles A.	S/Sgt	322 S. Main St. - Oxford, Ohio
French, Joseph D.	Sgt	1726 Jackson Ave. - New Castle, Penn.
Mulvey, William E.	Sgt	30 Eventon - Dorchester, Massachusetts
Versagi, Frank J.	Sgt	2566 E. 39 - Cleveland, Ohio
Weigele, George C.	Sgt	180 Schaeffer St. - Brooklyn, N. Y.
Adams, Charles M.	T/4	638 No. Lockwood Ave. Chicago, Illinois
Cohen, Harold B.	T/4	745 Eastern Pkwy Brooklyn, N.Y.
Davila, Robert F.	T/4	2702 Saunders St. San Antonio, Texas

Genova, Frank	T/4	2424 Benson Ave. Brooklyn, N. Y.
Gibelman, William	T/4	797 Hicks St. Brooklyn, N. Y.
Grippe, Michael	T/4	308 E. Kline Ave. Lansford, Penn
Hom, Kenneth G.	Cpl	4510 Mainfield Baltimore, Maryland
Jackson, Paul T.	Cpl	1231 E. Evans Pueblo, Colorado
Mougin, Charles E. Jr.	Cpl	375 North St. Pittsfield, Massachusetts
Ringelein, Francis D.	Cpl	1628 Maryland Ave. Flint, Michigan
Wylie, James L.	Cpl	Box 113 Houston, Pennsylvania
Beckman, Paul F.	TIS	1244 Summer - Lincoln, Nebraska
Fuszner, Paul J.	TIS	243 E. Big Bend Rd Kirkwood, Mo
Joy, Wesley V.	TIS	Narka, Kansas
[R]otfus, Samuel P.	TIS	1724 Park Place - Brooklyn, N. Y.
Stachowiak, Leonard L.	TIS	3421 So. 11 th Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Staton, Delbert C.	TIS	507 W. 6 th Pleasonton, Kansas
Underhill, Harvey T Jr.	TIS	477 Brenneman Bvd. Akron, Ohio
Williams, Don W.	TIS	Appleton City, Missouri
[W]illis, James F.	TIS	2045 So. Van Ness Santa Ana, Calif
[B]edient, Charles J.	Pfc	RFD #1 Newton Ave Norwalk, Conn
[B]raham, Walter E.	Pfc	RFD #4 Grove City, Pennsylvania
Burke, Raymond	Pfc	Box 36 Kawkawlin, Michigan
[Ba]jum, Martin L.	Pfc	RFD #1 Box 57 Livermore, California
[B]aigres, Manuel	Pfc	152 No. Roosevelt Oxnard, California
Clifton, James W	Pfc	Lakeland, Georgia
Cooke, LaRue A.	Pfc	RFD #3 Danville, Pennsylvania
[D]urboraw, Charles R.	Pfc	511 Cinnamenson Ave. Palmyra, NJ
[D]eal, Daniel T. Jr.	Pfc	608 Tuscaloosa Ave Birmingham, AL
Evans, Robert W.	Pfc	304 No. Broome Madison, Wisconsin
[F]eroyo, Antony	Pfc	833 E. Exchange Akron, Ohio
[G]ramza, Stephen	Pfc	51 Theodore Buffalo, N. Y.
Herrin, Milton W.	Pfc	839 Dooling Ave. Jacksonville, IL
Irwin, Jesse M Jr.	Pfc	4 Happy Hollow Lane Austin, Texas
Jennings, James P.	Pfc	78[2]8 Euclid Ave Chicago, IL
Johnson, Roy W.	Pfc	219 Jackson - Hampton, Viirginia
Jones, Robey L. Jr.	Pfc	Evadale, Texas
Jones, William C.	Pfc	Rte #1 - Coleman, Oklahoma
Kamen, Morton	Pfc	1204 Central Avenue Union City, N.J.
Kania, Stanley W. Jr.	Pfc	5814 Lawndale - Detroit, Michigan
Karadimos, Peter S.	Pfc	5500 First St NE - Washington, D.C.
Klein, Dennis N.	Pfc	1306 W. Agarita - San Antonio, Texas
Krug, Henry J. Jr.	Pfc	2812 E. Chase - Baltimore, Maryland
LeFever, Loris L.	Pfc	RFD #2 - Berne, Indiana
Malkin, Abraham	Pfc	6759 78 th Middle Village - L.I., N. Y.
Meany, Patrick J.	Pfc	630 Prospect Blvd. Waterloo, Iowa
Metzner, Sylvester J.	Pfc	RR #3 - Iena, Wisconsin
Meyers, Clark A.	Pfc	1000 W. Main St. - Lansing, Michigan

II. PREPARATION FOR THE OFFENSIVE

The company that moved into positions on the hill outside of Wimmenau was a mixture of combat wise veterans who had fought at Shirrhoffen, Soufflenheim, Drusenheim and Stattmatten and new replacements who came in to take the places of those who had fallen in action.

The enemy was not the great unknown of Christmas Eve when the company first went to the front lines. Much of the nervousness of the first anticipation was gone. To take its place had come a sureness born of experience and a wholesome respect for enemy tactics and enemy weapons. Perhaps of greater importance was the awareness that each man belonged to a good outfit in which mutual confidence in the abilities of the next man created a high morale.

Important too was the knowledge by every man in the company that the Battalion Commander would lead them into battle and wheresoever they went, he would be in front; where there was danger, there he would be; if the going got tough he would encourage them. They knew of his statement to a member of his staff which clarified his philosophy in the handling of his troops. "I try to treat my men as I would like my son's officers to treat him."

In short, the company that moved into position on the afternoon of 17 February 1945 after being on the road for eleven hours on a cold raw day, were combat soldiers, fighting men.

A. THE TRIP FROM BEZANGE-la-GRANDE

Following the successful defense of the Moder River line the infantry regiments of the 42nd Division were moved into an assembly area in a group of small French towns in the vicinity of Chateau Salins. Headquarters Company, First Battalion was quartered in Bezange-Ia-Grande and after a period of rest, recuperation and reinforcement were ordered to move out on the morning of 17 February 1945.

The company was alerted to move out at 0600. All rose early and all vehicles were ready to move at the appointed hour. Then wait. Two hours later at 0800 the convoy at last moved out for a destination unknown to the men. Speculation was rife. Are we going south to push across the Rhine in the vicinity of Strassbourg? Are we going north to meet the enemy in the vicinity of Hagenau? Where are we going?

Very soon it became evident that the convoy was traveling in a general northeasterly direction and then it became a question of where and when we would stop.

The weather was cold. Rain threatened. Yet the men, who by this time had become accustomed to convoy travel, had a pretty good time. The radio jeep turned on some music and at every stop men clustered around for a little jive or to get the news. Refreshments sent from home supplemented the K ration diet.

Finally, around 1600 in the afternoon the convoy pulled into the town of Wimmenau. At last, a warm bed and a place to get out of the cold. Our joy was momentary, however, since the positions to which we were assigned were on the reverse slope of a hill about a mile from town. We were to take up positions relieving the famous 45th Division which had dug in there.

A thousand questions flew back and forth between our group and the veterans that we were relieving. "Nothing to it around here." "Just a vacation compared with the Italian campaign." "A few shells every once in a while, but nothing much." All of this sounded

reassuring and the men began to look around to see what kind of quarters were available.

B. POSITIONS IN THE WOODS

The dug-outs occupied by the 45th were fairly good and the men settled down for the night as best they could. Anti-tank guns were moved into position. The first squad was placed on the right flank of the battalion sector overlooking the cemetery just outside the Reipertswiller. The second squad about 500 yards to the left just over the forward crest of a hill overlooking the town. The third squad went into position on the left flank of the Battalion sector. Communications section moved into dug-outs to the left of the CP area. The A & P platoons were located further down the hill. Members of the staff took over the dugouts in the former CP. Finally sleep for all except the handful of men left on guard.

With the coming of the dawn the men began to stir around to look at their new homes. Some of the dug-outs were quite comfortable, others resembled swimming pools. Immediately the job of home construction and renovation began. Dug-outs were enlarged. New dug-outs were carved out of the hillside. Heating systems of startling new design were invented and installed. Green boughs were cut for camouflage. The area was combed for abandoned German equipment such as shelter halves to water-proof the roofs. The underground shacks began to take on the aspect of home. All was not done in a day. Regular military duties came first.

The first squad of anti-tank platoon was moved back from its front line position of mobile reserve and to guard the CP. The communications section began to lay wire to the companies immediately. Radio section operated continuously. A switchboard was installed in a dug-out. Message center was set up adjacent to the 7. The A & P platoon dug additional dug-outs for the CP and began to repair the road. Constant contact was maintained with the line companies.

After a few days went by the area began to take on all the aspects of a regular camp although all was hid from enemy observation. The area was thoroughly policed. Regular duty rosters were kept. Constant improvement of living conditions continued.

The weather was quite cold and as the ground was very damp the men made stoves for all dug-outs. These were usually constructed of empty oil drums, worn out gas cans or ammunition cases cut so that fuel could be put in an a smoke stack inserted. All succeeded in providing some heat although occasionally the smoke would go in the wrong direction.

Lighting, too, was a major problem. Few candles were available and only a few of the men were able to improvise lights using captured German batteries. The problem was especially acute in the CP where many of the duties involved night work. The men in the motor pool were given the job of improvising a generator to provide electricity for the CP.

By this time a week had passed and the men were still on a K ration diet because the kitchens had not moved up. The diet in addition to becoming wearisome was not filling enough for men who were working hard all day long. Each platoon sent out foraging parties to see what the countryside could provide in the way of supplementary food. The favorite spot was the town of Reipertswiller, a haunted deserted town in the middle of no-mans land. The civilians had abandoned their crumbling houses but potatoes were plentiful. Midnight forays to the cellars yielded both fat and potatoes with which to make french fries. Those became a staple article of diet.

The pursuit of food supplementation was not without its adventures. One night, three members of the message center located a cow that had been abandoned by the fleeing civilians.

By the light of the moon that was playing hide and seek among the clouds the three chased the cow all over the pasture where it had been set loose. Although the area was halfway between our lines and the Jerry lines no shots were fired. Finally they succeeded in putting a rope around the cow's neck and leading her in. An agreement had been made with the medics to examine and butcher the cow so that every one would have fresh meat. When the medics arrived they took one look at the cow and decided that it didn't have enough meat on it to make it worth while butchering.

Not all of the food forays were so unsuccessful. An occasional deer had the misfortune to be in the line of sights when our men were out shooting at the enemy. A few chickens and rabbits that still were in Reiperseiller were liberated from Nazi mishandling and were converted into protein to sustain us.

In the interim the kitchen had moved up and established itself in Wimmenau. Each day food was brought up in mermite cans and the men once more had food.

C. THE JOB AT HAND - AGGRESSIVE PATROLLING

With the fundamental creature comforts at hand the business of fighting the enemy began in earnest. Patrols were organized to find out the disposition of the enemy, his strength and weapons. This work was largely in the hands of the Ranger platoon, a new unit in headquarters company.

During the fighting in the Alsace plain, scouting and patrolling parties were organized from men in the line companies. This often meant that men would be removed from the front line positions for night patrols and would get inadequate rest and sleep. At the command of the Divisional Commander there was therefore organized in each battalion a Ranger platoon made up of volunteers and recruits from the line companies. The reason for the organization of this group was to enable the men who were to do the hazardous night patrolling to get adequate rest and time to take care of their personal needs and equipment. The platoon had twenty four enlisted men and a platoon leader.

On the night of 18 February 1945 the Rangers went out on their first patrol. Five men were sent out with instructions to reconnoiter and patrol the area to the front of our left flank near the town of Saegmuhl. The intent was to give the men experience in patrolling by assigning what were thought to be areas that were not particularly dangerous.

The men blackened their faces and wore wool caps that wouldn't clink when brushed against a tree. After arming themselves with automatic weapons they moved out to a point about 600 yards in front of our lines. They were following the edge of the woods adjacent to a large open clearing. The lead scout, Sgt. West, thought he saw a Jerry in the field and stopped the patrol. They stood there about ten minutes staring through the darkness trying to discover if anyone was actually there or whether it was their imagination. The object seemed to stand and stare right back at them. The men were tense. Three had never seen any action before. Even the trees seemed to move. After a time they could see an object about 150 yards away which appeared to be bending up and down in the middle of the field. The patrol had been told that it was possible that civilians might be encountered and through that perhaps it was a civilian. The patrol therefore advanced cautiously to within 30 yards of the object and then they noticed four men just sitting on the ground. It appeared that the Jerries were putting in booby traps or mines.

At that moment the patrol was observed by the Heines. Our men withheld their fire as they had been instructed and the Heines began to advance toward them. They could see two more of the enemy walking back and forth from the woods to the clearing. Pfc. Barker, the left flank man, then came up and reported that some of the Jerries were coming up around the left flank to get around the patrol and cut them off. Our men pulled back about 100 yards beyond the edge of the woods. The men in the open field kept advancing steadily. The men on the left kept coming. Our men kept withdrawing to the edge of the woods until they reached their own lines. They stood there ten minutes and then decided to go across the clearing. To the relief of all, the Jerries stopped at the edge of the woods and the men returned safely.

Patrols went out night and day and as the men grew to be more experienced they became more aggressive. Encounters with the enemy were common. Every patrol came back with information that was to prove of value later.

One night two men took out on a patrol and proceeded through a gully behind Hill 345. They just ambled along until they came to a barbed wire fence where they were halted by a German guard. Both hit the ground, one of the men losing his pants on the barbed wire. They laid there for a half hour while the Heines sent men out to look for them. The night was black and although the Heines passed within ten yards of them they were not seen. They got up and took off around the right flank for about 500 to 600 yards at which point they ran into another party of Nazis. They believed that they had been seen so they threw a hand grenade at the advancing Nazis and took off like "Big assed birds".

D. LOCAL SECURITY

The position on the hill northeast of Wimmenau was strictly a defensive set-up. When elements of the 222 Inf., the 242 Inf., and the 117 Cavalry Recon. Squadron pulled out, the Battalion covered the entire Division front. Local security became an important function of headquarters company. During prior engagements it had become customary to use one of the company platoons to guard the CPo. However, the anti-tank platoon, and later on the 24th February the A&P platoon were ordered on the line. Communications platoon was busy laying wire and providing communication over extremely long distances. No men were available for security except a handful of company messengers. It was therefore thought wise to organize a security platoon whose function would be to protect the CP.

As fillers came in twelve men were chosen for their military bearing and military courtesy and were given training in their duties. They took up their posts around the CP and immediately began to encounter imaginary Germans in the middle of the night. The slightest movement of the trees in the wind was an enemy patrol. This period was only of short duration. Soon the men became accustomed to their tasks but the dull routine of watch was enlivened by frequent incidents.

In order to have adequate cover from sniper fire the men had dug fox-holes for the sentries at the standing posts and had camouflaged them. One pitch black night one of the staff officers stepped from his tent, unbuttoned his trousers, and began to give the sentry who was in the foxhole an unwelcome shower. The sentry thought it was a new secret enemy weapon.

On another occasion the platoon went out at night to investigate reported enemy movements in the proximity of the CP. They carefully stole up on the designated area and ambushed the cluster of bushes that had been reported as an enemy patrol.

Because actual enemy patrols were in the vicinity at other times however, the men took their work seriously. One day for example, General Collins came to the CP area. The security platoon had orders to permit no vehicles with the CP area. The General's car was stopped and the sentry informed him he could not come through. "I'm the General" the occupant informed him. "Yes, sir, you will have to park your car in the parking lot." And the General did.

Most of this group were young and had prodigious appetites, despite the constant complaints about the quality of the chow many of this group were seen going back for "seconds" three or four times.

The security platoon living quarters were unique. Although the other platoons had two or three man dugouts, the Security platoon built themselves a very large dug out for the entire platoon. This simplified the heating problem and developed the spirit of comradery.

E. ENEMY ACTION - THE INCOMING MAIL

Although the hill positions were idyllic from a nature lover's point of view the sounds that filled the air were very often not those of the birds twittering in the trees. The enemy had mortars and artillery and used them. Intermittent harassing fire by the enemy was an everyday occurrence. But far more often could be heard the sweet plunk of the 4.2 mortars located down in the valley to our right. As regularly as clock work they would send their shells whistling into Heine territory and it was a sound that aided and comforted the men. Some of the shells sent over by the 4.2 mm mortars were propaganda leaflets.

The enemy also did some patrolling at night to discover our dispositions and some these patrols succeeded in filtering through because the Battalion was covering such a wide front.

F. LIVING IN THE FIELD

The men gradually became accustomed to the outdoor life and the intermittent enemy fire.

Work was started on necessary improvements for the comfort of the men and greater working efficiency. The A&P platoon built an outdoor shower and had a detail of men heating water so that constant hot water was available. Showers were limited to five minutes duration and one of the facts to which the platoon points with pride is the fact that the time limitation applied to officers and men alike.

The radio section constructed a network of directional antennas so that transmissions could be beamed to patrols and to the widely separated companies. The A&P platoon circled the area with trip wires and flares to make a surprise raid impossible and then spent weeks constructing accordions of barbed wire. These were delivered to the line companies so that they could be installed at needed locations.

Dug-outs were constantly improved. One dug-out in the wire section boasted of electric lighting, sofa, oil paintings, gas stove and real chairs. The CP dugouts were also enlarged and made more comfortable.

In the meantime, a rest center had been set up in Wimmenau where men could get clean clothing and a bath. The two men from the anti-tank platoon who were set to get rested up, were assigned to "honor guard" during their stay in the rest center and were glad to get back. Two other men had a wonderful time when they received passes to Nancy.

Down in the motor pool Sgt. Cottle worked day and night to fix up a generator to provide the CP with light.

On Sundays Chaplain Kidd conducted service in the woods near the Communications platoon dug-outs. The mellow sound of the organ and of men's voices singing the old hymns echoed from the hillside. Attendance was usually good and the men enjoyed the sermons.

The big event of each day, however, was mail call. Usually mail was distributed after dinner and the men would go off by themselves to read their mail. Of course, when packages came, as they very often did, they were opened on the spot so that all could see whether the folks at home were still sending cigarettes and soap, items of which we had an abundance. One of the standing jokes of the day was the receipt of articles from home which the men had requested but for which the need had long since passed. "C'est la guerre!"

The men soon discovered that in the nearby town of Ingwiller there was a famous brewery which now brewed a concoction which although drinkable would hardly have made a reputation for the brewery. Barrels of beer were brought up on the hill and those who were thirsty drank. There was little danger of becoming intoxicated on the one per cent beer.

Mascots began to appear among the men. The [most] famous of these was the goat which the A&P platoon picked up in Reipertswiller. The goat was wandering around loose in the town and the men, spotting a wonderful mascot, brought him back to the hill positions with the intention of training him to be the platoon mascot. After all, West Point had its goat, why not HIB. Food for the goat was scarce because the snow had only recently melted and grass had not begun to grow. Next night, therefore, a detail of men went into Reipertswiller which was under close enemy observation and brought back a load of hay for the goat. In order to vary the diet, the goat was also fed tin ration cans which he seemed to enjoy and other like delicacies including K ration biscuits for which he had a yen. The goat stayed around a while and naturally such glorious material for a prank could not be permitted to go to waste. One day Pfc Stein got the idea of putting the goat into bed with Marshall who was a noted sleepy head. The goat was shoved into the dugout and the door closed as Marshall slept. Inside, the goat, a little bewildered, began to move around and to lick Marshall's face. This was pleasant for a while but soon Marshall reached out his hand and felt the hairy shank of the goat and smelled the not exactly perfumed odor of him. All illusions that it was a pretty girl vanished and both Marshall and the goat came pouring out the door like the devil was chasing them. A few days later the goat was taken down to Wimmenau on a trip into town and there vanished.

Entertainment took forms other than practical jokes. In the evening a crap game could usually be found especially near payday. There is a story told about Pfc Peffley, one of the switch board operators in connection with such a game. Peffley shot crap with enthusiasm. After he got warmed up his shirt would come off. He would go through assorted gymnastics as he rolled the bones, getting down on his knees and contorting his body and working up a good lather. One night after a hectic game he went to his dug-out which also housed the switchboard and went to sleep. "Happy Jack" Sloan who was on duty could see his body contort and twitch in his sleep and for the hell of it said, "Faded for ten dollars." "Shoot," said Peffley in his sleep, and for half an hour thereafter they played an imaginary dices game in which Peffley won fabulous amounts although he was fast asleep.

A few days afterwards Peffley had the unfortunate experience of proving that all guns are loaded. While sitting at the switchboard during a period in which there were not many calls, he started to clean his pistol. He removed the clip but failed to remove the cartridge which was in

the chamber and which he had forgotten about. He accidentally pulled the trigger and shot himself through the thigh and leg.

There was a good deal of "chicken" during this period, none of it served on plates. An order came through from higher headquarters that the bivouac area would be thoroughly policed and although HIB had always prided itself on the immaculate way in which its area was kept, men were sent to comb the woods and the camp area to pick up paper and refuse. One of these details policed up a road that was in full view of the enemy and was actually in front of some of the front line positions. "A hell of an Army this is," was the general comment, "when we have to police up no-mans land."

G. INTRODUCTION TO THE MULE

In preparation for the job that was to come a number of mules were assigned to the company. These mules were later used to haul rations and wire to the men in mountain positions but at Wimmenau they were a trial and a tribulation. Men were assigned to the job of mule skinner and soon learned that you can push the lever down on a jeep and it will go faster but a mule has a mind of its own. Furthermore, a mule has to be fed and watered and has ideas about how he would like to carry a pack. The trainees sweated and cursed but finally the mule was mastered.

With the coming of the mules began the perennial rumors about where the outfit was going and when. It seemed likely that the company was due for some mountain fighting and the map confirmed the rumor. The time for the attack was approaching.

H. THE BIG BRIGADE

The propaganda leaflets had induced a number of Germans to surrender but not enough. One evening the men were told that at 1900 that evening our artillery would fire every gun in the area at the Heines. Promptly at the appointed hour the artillery and the mortars let loose with everything that they had. It sounded as though the heavens were coming down and the men vied with each other in identifying the various guns. The softening up process for the coming offensive had begun.

That night the Germans replied. But the contrast between our tremendous salvos and the few rounds that the Germans sent over tended to increase the confidence of the men. A few of the shells fell in Wimmenau where Regimental headquarters was located and the men commented on the fact that at last the rear echelon commandoes were beginning to learn the sound of gunfire.

I. REIPERTSWILLER AND THE INTELLIGENCE SECTION

The story of Wimmenau is not complete without an account of the strange warfare that was waged in Reipertswiller. Repeatedly shelled by both sides, Reipertswiller was a ghost town, without inhabitants. Most houses were hollow shells. Just outside the town were the Heine line. Both the enemy and ourselves had outposts in the town.

During the day our men would ride down the streets of the town on bicycles to their front line positions and not a shot would be fired on either side. When the Battalion Commander

heard of this, however, bicycle riding came to an abrupt halt.

At night Reipertswiller had an entirely different aspect. Our Intelligence Section set up a listening post in one of the houses and nightly Heine patrols would come past the house. The telephone bell began to sound like the trumpet of the angel Gabriel so the men in the listening post muted it.

Keeping the telephone wire intact so that communication between the companies and Battalion CP could be maintained was a problem. On one occasion flat trajectory fire broke the line in three places. The men went out to repair the wire and mortar shells landed about 20 yards away breaking the wire in a fourth place. After fixing the wire the men returned to the outpost where the man who had remained on duty exclaimed, "Now if we could only have a little excitement. "

One night a few Heines were heard moving in the town and one of the men wanted to see how many there were in the party. In the dark he fell down the stairs making enough noise to waken the dead but obviously the Nazis were avoiding trouble because they kept right on going.

After two weeks, the outpost position was moved from the town to a well camouflaged position in the hills. Here other problems were encountered. When our own artillery shelled the Nazis, the sound, especially at night, would reverberate through the hills and the line companies would report that German burp guns were firing because that is what it sounded like. Inquiries would begin pouring in over the phone as to why the outpost had nothing to report and what was the extent of the activity.

J. NICKNAMES AND THEIR ORIGIN

Where ever there are American soldiers there is a "Butch", a "Whitey". Some of these nicknames are lightly acquired. Others are a badge of courage, token of valor, that become attached to the individual. In HIB many earned their nicknames, some had their nicknames attached to them. The period spent in the vicinity of Wimmenau was especially prolific in the production of nicknames.

There was S/Sgt William J. Burton, radio chief, who became "Windy Bill" because of his delight in telling tall stories of his achievements in the Pacific and with the women. Pfc. Jack Sloan, a switchboard operator, became "Happy Jack" a name carried over from the Air Corps but revived again. There too, Sgt. Wild became known as "Shakey" because of his reactions to 88's. "Skoop" Niewold was named because of his nose for news. In the A-T platoon there was "Trench Knife" Meyers and "Pretty Boy" Mouglin. "Dr" Petit with the unmentionable panacea for all ills. "Pancho" Rodrigues and "Trader" Gramza. In the Intelligence Section, there was "The Wheel" Evans and the "Greek" Karadimos.

Some of the officers also had nicknames many of the men used. Lt. Lanzen was alternately "E.J." or "The Whip". Lt. Price was most often called "Pierce" for no good reason. Lt. Baum was called the "Snake" because he was long and stringy. The nickname that was won with blood and guts was probably the most outrageous of all. Lt. Stanley became known as "Ranger Duff" or "Rabbit Ass". But this was no indication of disrespect. He had earned the name by his courage in Sessenheim and his wild dash across the country which helped to save the lives of his platoon. It was the badge of honor equal in the eyes of the men to the Silver Star which he had won.

K. THE PREPARATION IS COMPLETE

The patrolling that characterized this period daily grew more aggressive. Information was obtained and sent back to higher headquarters. Combat patrols went out and collected German prisoners for questioning. Finally, after 28 days of comparative quiet, we were ready to push. On 14 March 1945, the platoon leaders informed their platoons that the 7th Army was ready to launch a general attack along a 50-mile front beginning at dawn of 15 March. All units were to prepare to move immediately. The news was received in sober silence. In front of us were the Hardt Mountains and a determined enemy. This was to be a tough job and every man knew that casualties could be expected. It was a pretty sober group that prepared their equipment for the move.

This serious moment also had its comedy relief. Only a few hours before the announcement that we were to move came through, Sgt. Cottle had finally repaired the motor generator. The CP lights, the wiring had been installed. All that remained to be done was to hook up the plant. The bald-headed Cottle was crestfallen that all his weeks of work were to come to naught.

* * *

III. THE ATTACK

As darkness fell on 14 March 1945 the Anti-Tank platoon pulled its guns out of position and sent them back to the motor pool. The men of the platoon were sent to relieve the riflemen of B Company so that the front line troops could get a good night's sleep before launching their attack the following morning. Although the platoon numbered only 26 men a battalion front had to be covered. A thin line of outpost guards were sent out, distances between posts ranged from 200 to 300 yards. Final dispositions were completed by midnight. Fortunately there was little activity during the night although a few rounds of artillery landed in the area.

A. THE JUMP OFF

Shortly after dawn the artillery laid down a covering smoke screen on Hill 301 and the town of Reipertswiller. Under the concealment afforded by the smoke the officers and men of B company filed out of the assembly area near the town and advanced up Hill 301. Almost

immediately they ran into enemy machine gun positions and heavy fighting broke out.

The men gradually fought their way up the hill against stiff enemy resistance and about 1100 started for their next objective, Hill 335. Enemy rifle fire subsided considerably in the early afternoon and the brief respite was to take stock of supplies. A radio message was sent back calling for ammunition and water which were running low.

B. AMMUNITION AND WATER

About two o'clock in the afternoon Lt. Lanzen, S/Sgt Miller and a group of thirteen other A&P men toiled up the hill and delivered water and ammunition. All made the trip safely. Another call for ammunition was radioed in from Baker company. Carrying the water and ammunition on pack boards loaded on their backs, seven men started out from Reipertswiller which at that time was under artillery fire. As they started up the hill one of the men stepped on a "Bouncing Betty" mine and Davis was killed, and Plant so seriously wounded that he later died at the aid station. Guzman, North, Marshall and Chaigres were slightly wounded. The medic who accompanied the party carried Plant back to the aid station. Although all except one man was wounded, the party continued up the hill.

Pfc. Stein, the man who escaped injury, was saved by the fact that he was bent over by the weight of the water can which he was carrying. The fragment narrowly missed his head and went through the can. He didn't know the can was hit and asked Chaigres to put the lid back on. Chaigres replied that the lid was on the can and Stein realized for the first time that he had had a miraculous escape, and that the water was splashing out of a hole in the can.

The party continued on up the hill for about 100 yards more when artillery began to land within 20 feet. Chaigres was hit again. All dropped to the ground. As soon as the shelling stopped Chaigres went back to the aid station. The others continued on but soon had to stop when it became obvious that the enemy had them under observation and were dropping shells all around them. The group put their water and ammunition packs down and withdrew with the intention of going up again under the cover of darkness. They marked the path with engineers tape as they came down so they could avoid mines in the dark.

When darkness set in the group delivered the precious ammunition and water under the covering guns of the Ranger platoon who accompanied them.

C. CASUALTIES

In the meantime, the forward aid station had been moved into Reipertswiller although the town was being shelled frequently. At 1015 the first casualties came into the aid station. From then on it was a "blood purge". A constant stream of casualties kept coming into the aid station until a total of 44 wounded and 8 dead were counted. The main cause of the injury was the Shu mine and the "Bouncing Betty". Wounds from enemy rifle and artillery fire were few but the woods were thick with mines and these took a terrific toll of the men in the Battalion. Two aid men were casualties.

The front line troops fought valiantly but the unarmed aid men also did their share. One of the aid men was taking care of a wounded man in a heavy weapons company. As he bent over the man who was lying on the ground a sniper fired and hit the aid man in the buttock. Pfc McFarland went down. Another aid man who was in the vicinity came over to ask what was

wrong. McFarland, who felt no pain said that he would be all right in a few moments. He thought the concussion from a shell had knocked him over. Pfc. McCracken, the second aid man bent over to check on McFarland was hit in the identical spot by the sniper. Each dressed the other's wound. Then despite their own wounds they went around among the men and sent fifteen men to the aid station before they themselves came in.

When the two came to the aid station they found a large group of wounded men waiting for medical attention and more were coming in every minute. They waited around for two hours until all the other casualties were treated before requesting aid for themselves.

D. COUNTERATTACK

On the hill a few changes had taken place. About four o'clock in the afternoon Capt. Lieber and five squads of men from A company moved abreast of B company and took up positions to their left. The objective for this group was Hill 343. Elements of B company moved forward to Hill 335.

Action started early in the evening. B company reported being counterattacked by what they thought to be a company of Germans. A company, on the left, was meeting lighter resistance but couldn't send help. Artillery fire was called for to completely box B company in because their positions on Hill 335 were being counterattacked from three sides. After one barrage which registered perfectly fire from the Jerries subsided. In A company's sector too, the fight quieted down and the men were all shifted to Hill 335 for the night where a perimeter of defense was set up. A quiet night was spent by the men in the forward positions.

E. ADVENTURE IN THE REAR

But back to the rear, where the A-T platoon was holding the Battalion front through which the others had pushed, things were not so quiet. It was a dark night and visibility was poor. The men were nervous. When Sgt. Gravelin reported hearing a noise to his front, Lt. Price advised him to use his hand grenades if he thought it necessary. A few minutes later Bedient opened up with his Tommy gun. Sgt. Gravelin threw two hand grenades. Constant advice as to what to do came in over the party line phone from the other squads. More and more Heines kept coming. Artillery fire was ordered. The outpost battle continued until dawn by which time about 20 grenades and 200 rounds of 45 cal. Ammunition had been expended by the two men. Every one was sure that at least 50 Germans lay dead in the sector but by dawn's early light a thorough reconnaissance found only one rabbit with shrapnel wounds in the rear end and no trace of any Heines whatsoever.

F. THE ADVANCE CONTINUES

At daybreak the five squads of A company returned to Hill 343 there to be joined about noon by the remainder of the company. C company was also brought forward at this time. By two o'clock the troops were ready and pushed off on the attack again. Little resistance was encountered and all troops pushed to their objectives in the area near the town of Barenthal.

As darkness approached the troops bedded down for the night after posting security, but orders came down for the troops to move forward to the road junction near Barenthal and there

meet the rest of the Battalion. It was bitterly cold night and some of the troops arrived at the junction by 0300 and waited there until 0600. When the remaining troops arrived all moved into the town of Berenthal.

The medics spent the night at the forward litter post in the outskirts of Reipertsweiler in the company of two Heines who were permanently prevented from snoring. The medics had their fingers crossed hoping that no casualties would occur because mines in the road had blown the track from a 35 ton bull dozer blocking the road so that jeeps could not go up the hill to collect wounded. Fortunately the only casualties were two forward observers who were slightly wounded.

G. THE LITTER OF WAR

Moving up to Barenthal the men had their first view of what later was to become a common sight. Dead men, partly decomposed, lay on the side of the road, some burned to death, some shot, one with an arm outstretched in a Nazi salute even in death. Dead cattle swelled to hideous shapes and emitting a terrific stench were everywhere. War was not a pretty thing but the one reaction of the man was that at last we were seeing "Good" Germans. Arms and ammunition were strewn everywhere for, although the Heines appeared to have been well dug in they had left in a great hurry.

H. BARENTHAL TO PETERBACHAL

On the morning of the 17th the men resumed their forward progress and pushed on. The bridge at Barenthal was in bad condition and the men roared with laughter when our diminutive message center trailer got stuck and the men piled out of the jeep lifted it across the bridge and proceeded onward without getting a yard beyond the convoy.

The route was in a general northeasterly direction through Phillpsbourg which had been pretty badly shot up to an area about one mile south west of Neunhoffen where the troops bivouaced. All night long jeeps moved in and out of town bringing wire and ammunition up to the troops who were scheduled to move out at 0200. In the road was a mine marked only with the cellophane wrapper from a K ration and all night long jeeps driving with black out lights passed it.

On the morning of the 18th the troops again pushed out. The CP group with its mules carrying wire so that communication with rear elements could be maintained. The mules would not cross the mud bottom of the creek and the wire men moved the wire forward, carrying the 95 lb load on their backs for two miles.

At the north end of Neunhoffen a detail consisting of several men from communications and A-T platoons came forward in two jeeps with additional wire. They found the mined bridge impossible to cross although foot elements had gone over. S/Sgt Jones and Pfc Beers removed ten 4.2 mm mortar shells to which dynamite detonators were attached and a Q. out four teller mines. They threw planks on the bridge to repair it and drove the jeeps across. The wire was moved up to within 500 yards of the front line by jeep.

As the men moved through the town the inhabitants distributed apples and brought out bottles of wine. The men were skeptical of the hospitality and looked with suspicion on the fawning servility of the people who lined the street.

All morning long, through the mist and rain, the troops continued on toward Obersteinbach. Toward afternoon the weather cleared. At the approaches to Obersteinbach were concrete blockhouses on which marks of recent hits by our shells could be seen. The blockhouse guarded all approaches to the bridge that led into town and the men wondered why the Germans had not held out longer in the seemingly impregnable position. The motor column was held up briefly while the engineers completed the bridge across the river and then the column moved out to the left of the town toward Petersbachel. Recently removed mines could be seen on the side of the road.

1. CROSSING INTO GERMANY

To the foot troops who were slogging along, the journey seemed interminable and they were fast growing tired from lack of sleep and being on the go so long. Up over the hill and then down through a park-like valley they marched until they came upon two brown stones set in the left side of the road. Here was the German border at last. A little further along the road was the Sign:

"NOW CROSSING INTO GERMANY
COMPLIMENTS OF THE 117 CAV. RECONS"

In an instant the packs seemed lighter. Everyone felt swell. Many took a few minutes break and expressed their emotions by urinating on the soil of Germany. A treasured bottle of schnapps was passed around. It was swell.

Some who wanted to treasure the memory jotted down the exact time they crossed. The medics, for example, who were in the motor column behind the foot troops crossed at 16:27 but of course other elements had crossed before them.

The road continued on through dense woods and as evening approached the men broke out the K rations and ate them. In the communications platoon a two burner gas stove was put on the hood of the message center jeep and a hot meal was cooked as the jeep slowly flowwled after the foot troops. A bivouac area in the woods southwest of Petersbachel was finally reached and the men dug in for the night.

Other elements of the platoon entered the town of Petersbachel and set up a CP there.

J. THE STRUGGLE FOR FISHBACK

Meanwhile the foot troops had pushed beyond Petersbachel and had been in the vicinity of Fishback all day. The A-T platoon also had been alerted and had moved up to act as outpost guards for the rifle troops of C company. The positions selected were on the summit of a hill approximately 1000 yards from the town of Fishback. The top of the hill was solid rock and when the two men climbed up on top, the Heines opened up on them with machine gun fire.

With the excellent observation afforded from these positions the men were able to locate several huge enemy pillboxes, an ammunition dump and two anti-tank guns. *S/Sgt* Hersh directed the fire against the guns and knocked them out. A round hit the ammo dump and blew it up. At that time the enemy discovered the outpost positions and began to rake them with machine gun fire. Our men ordered artillery on the machine gun positions which were knocked out or silenced.

Sgt. Gravelin directed the fire against the pill-boxes. The artillery officer requested the assistance of Corps artillery. Two of the pill boxes received direct hits.

The outposts were doing such effective work that the Heines again opened up on them with machine gun fire from concealed positions. The men could not locate the source of the firing so finally *S/Sgt* Hersh stood up in the open to draw fire while *Pfc* Zukunft observed where the machine gun was located. *Pfc* Zukunft had trouble locating the gun when it first opened up and *S/Sgt* Hersh stood up again. This time the gun was spotted and the artillery did the rest.

A little later in the day a column of enemy troops were seen marching across a field into a nearby woods apparently with the intention of forming for an attack on the outpost positions. A few well directed shells broke up the formation. However, the enemy seemed determined to knock out the outpost positions at all costs. An undetermined number of enemy troops move up through the woods directly below the positions and began to fire rifles and machine guns. *Lt* Price sent back for the rest of his platoon and ordered them to deploy in the area between the 1st and 2nd squad positions as this seemed to be the point of the enemy attack. Artillery was again called for in the woods in which the Heines were advancing. After 30 minutes of shelling nothing further was heard of the Heines. Full complements of men were left to guard the outposts but although word was received that a counter-attack might be expected, the night of the 18th passed quietly in no-man's land.

The next day, the 19th, the anti-tank platoon continued to direct fire on observed targets. *Pfc* Hill climbed up an improvised ladder to the top of the rock to get a clear view of the enemy pill boxes and was hit in the left shoulder with a machine gun bullet. He continued to direct fire until the pill box was knocked out and then climbed down the ladder unaided although he had a compound fracture of the shoulder blade. He was bleeding badly and when he reached a safe position he laid down to wait for the medics. An improvised stretcher of small trees and a blanket was constructed by the men and Hill was carried into Petersbachel because the road was under enemy observation and it was feared that the enemy would fire at the ambulance.

But the incident that gave the platoon gray hairs that day involved our own artillery. Corps artillery was firing to knock out some concrete pill boxes directly in front of the positions. One of the guns was firing short. The men heard the round coming in and knew it was our own artillery. The round landed about 75 yards to the right rear of the positions. The men dived into the foxholes and when the shell hit, the ground seemed to shake for five minutes. *Lt* Price called the artillery officer to report the short round. At the same time another round came in and the men felt sure that there were more to follow. Each one seemed to come closer. The Lieutenant really raised hell on the phone but before the orders could be relayed to Corps a total of six rounds from our eight inch guns had come in. The men had ample proof that when Heine prisoners reported that American artillery was hell they were not making an understatement.

About 1400 the men were informed that the enemy positions around Fishback would be strafed and bombed by fighter planes and that an attack would be launched against the enemy on the morning of the 20th. The A-T platoon had perfect positions to observe the aerial attack and *Col* Custer and a party of officers came up to see the show. Red panels were displayed so that our planes would not strafe and bomb our front line positions. The planes did such an effective job that in a few hours the target was so obscured with smoke that visual observation from the ground was useless and the men had to move quietly so that when the enemy fired the direction of the fire could be estimated.

Other platoons were having their adventures too. At sun down a party of the jeeps were

loading wire onto mules about 1000 yards east of Peterbachel preparatory to moving the wire up the hill to the line companies. Two accurately placed rounds came within a few yards of the jeeps. Every one took off in order to get out of enemy observation.

The medics reported that three engineer casualties were treated during the day. They had been clearing the road to Fishback. Plasma saved the life of one man who was badly hurt. It appeared that the Heines had been using an ingenious type of booby trap that swung out from the trees when an attempt was made to push a road block away.

But the events that transpired by day were as nothing compared with the happenings of the night.

About 2200 the A-T platoon was ordered to send a patrol down into Fishback to determine whether the bridge across the stream had been blown by the enemy. Sgt. Gravelin, Sgt. Rothell and Pfc. Petit left the CP at 2215 to make a reconnaissance of the bridge. They moved down the hill as stealthily as possible but quiet movement through the dry woods was impossible. To the left the woods were on fire from the artillery shelling and lit the sky. As they neared the edge of the woods near the town the enemy opened fire with four machine guns. The guns were so placed that they had excellent cross fire across the small clearing which the men would have to traverse in order to observe the bridge. It was impossible to move forward. The patrol radioed back asking for white phosphorous shells by the 4.2 mm mortars which were attached to the Battalion in order to light up the area and give them some protection while they checked on the condition of the bridge. The shells came in and the patrol was able to see that one end of the bridge was intact but it was impossible to determine whether it was good enough condition for vehicles to cross. The patrol returned about 0200 and reported that it could not reach the bridge because of heavy machine gun fire nor could they be certain that the bridge was passable.

K. "WO IS DER KELLER?"

While the A-T platoon was out patrolling the remainder of Headquarters Company, by this time dead on its feet from exhaustion, was not sleeping very comfortably. Beginning at dusk and continuing into the night the German artillery shelled the town. The fire came in two periods, a few scattered shots early in the evening and then regular harassing fire the remainder of the night. After the first rounds came in there was a long period of silence and the men slept, some on beds and some on straw on the floor. After a few hours the Heines began to walk mortar shells down the streets of the town alternating from one side of the street to the other and the men made a concerted dash for the cellars. Here was born the famous cry, "Wo is der keller?", to this day the only words in German that some of the men knew. For communications platoon "Wo is der Keller?" was a problem because the only one available was full of potatoes and was cold. However, the men bedded down as best they could and slept superficially through the night. The CP personnel fared better because they were in a clean concrete cellar that was much better protection.

The security platoon which had walked all day and most of the previous night were so tired that when the shells began to come in the men woke up long enough to have a short conference on what to do and then decided, "To hell with it, if we get hit, we get hit", and all went back to sleep.

The aid station now transferred their equipment to the cellar so that they could operate if

communications came in.

L. ANOTHER PATROL

If we were to take Fishback the next morning it was essential that the condition of the bridge be known. Accordingly at 0300 A-T platoon was ordered to send another patrol to make a reconnaissance of the bridge. The patrol found that it was still impossible to cross the clearing so they hid at the edge of the woods until daybreak. They could then see that the bridge had been knocked out and would be impassable to vehicles.

The next morning the line companies moved out at dawn against Fishback and the men of Headquarters company were ordered to assemble in Petersbachel. The A-T men came down from their positions resembling the unshaven heroes of "Up Front with Maudlin" but in the few hours that they had before the convoy left they cleaned up and shaved.

M. HITLER YOUTH, SLAVE LABOR AND LICE

Petersbachel will remain in the memories of the men for several things. The fighting, of course. But here too a number of men had their first experience with the HJ. Hitler Jugend or Hitler Youth. Here they encountered their first slave laborers! Here they met some of Hitler's lice.

The men had noticed that a youngster of perhaps 13 years of age was hanging around the jeeps and kept watching the men as they went about their tasks. They ordered him out of the way a few times but otherwise paid little attention to him. One of the men saw him carrying some German equipment during the afternoon and at the point of a gun, compelled the youth to show him where he had found it. After a little persuading the youth showed the men a hole in which were buried hand grenades and mortar ammunition. In Germany there was no age of innocence. No matter how young, these were all Nazi.

The men had heard much of the slave labor that the Nazis had imported from conquered countries. But when half a dozen Poles dressed in a motley uniform mostly German came down the road the men were ready to shoot. "Polski, Polski," they shouted. When these men were questioned it was found that they had been working on road blocks and they had much information to give on the location of mine fields and road blocks.

These things will be remembered by all. The lice, by the unfortunate ones who slept in the straw. Stars and Stripes had carried articles about lice and the danger of typhus but everyone was sure that they referred to the other fellow, until the morning of the 20th. Then many found tracks across their stomachs or near their genitals or on other warm parts of the body that showed the way stations where the lice had stopped to eat. And did the bites itch. These were indeed the "werewolves" of whom the men had heard. Pass the louse powder.

N. NIEDERSTEINBACH TO OBER SCHIETTENBACH

The 232nd Infantry had spearheaded the Division drive thus far and now was brought back to hold the line while the other two infantry Regiments went forward. From Peters bache l the convoy headed southeast and in an uneventful but dusty and dirty ride recrossed the frontier into France and set up a CP in the border town of Neider steinbach.

Billets were difficult to find because an armored outfit was in town preparing to push off. The Anti-Tank platoon set up one gun position to supplement the defenses established by the TD's and then moved into a house that had been evacuated by the civilians. There they cleaned house and then crawled into blankets for a well-earned rest.

Communications platoon and the A & P platoon found fair quarters. The officers and headquarters platoon were quartered in a hotel. Despite the lack of housing in town, one house across the street from message center stood empty. The Recons had found a delayed action time bomb under the front steps, had disconnected it, and then evacuated the house. No one else cared to risk the chance of occupying the house.

The next day the men spent cleaning up. Some of the medics found a civilian barber and indulged in the luxury of a shave and shampoo. Others read the paper for the first time in days and found the news good. We had taken Ludwigswinkel. Patton's army was making rapid advances. The Germans were retreating across our front in a general northeasterly direction.

The two days spent in Niedersteinbach were not all rest and relaxation. On 22 March a Ranger patrol was sent out from the town to reconnoiter a road behind our lines for condition of the road, mines and roadblocks so that it could be used when the company moved out. The patrol took the wrong turn of the road and went out in front of our lines directly in the path of the German retreat. The five men in the patrol went about one mile out of the way and then realized that they were in the wrong position. They stopped to consult a map and were fired upon by German machine guns. Pfc West was immediately wounded. Pfc Anderson and Pfc Barker were wounded a second later. All hit the ground. Shriver, who was not wounded, Pfc Anderson, who was shot in the leg, and Pfc Barker, who had three shots in the hip, crawled about 300 yards to the nearest cover and then under the protective concealment of trees came back to the CPo Pfc was lying wounded in an exposed spot and Pfc LaMere, who was lead scout, and slightly in advance in a position that had good cover, proceeded to crawl to West. Despite the wound, he dragged West over to the edge of the road where they had partial protection. Both then played dead.

In the meantime Shriver led Lt. Stanley and six men back to the spot where the wounded men lay. They arrived about an hour and a half after the shooting and carried the men back in. Pfc Evans drove out with a jeep and met them about half a mile out. He encountered the returning party in the bottom of a longitudinal gully, loaded the wounded men into the jeep and drove back.

A prisoner taken next day said that an anti-tank gun was pointed down the gully directly at the jeep when they were loading the wounded men but that they had not fired because at the that time they were ready to surrender.

The short rest at Niedersteinbach soon came to an end. Orders came down to prepare to move to Schonau, which was over the crest of a steep hill to the north. The day was beautiful and the convoy started out with the men in high spirits. The move to Schonau was uneventful. A CP was set up and a number of men took advantage of the occasion to visit the home of Heinrich Himmler, the Nazi hangman. All were impressed with the massive furniture and costly antiques. As in many of the homes of the big Nazi big-wigs, art objects from all over Europe were to be found in the house and it was obvious, that at least for the men at the top, Nazism had paid big dividends.

The radio section acquired a Swiss-type chalet on the side of the mountain overlooking the city for quarters. It was completely equipped even to cast iron [two illegible lines bottom 15]

gnomes and a beautiful rock garden. The Nazis had been doing a little digging in the garden because machine gun emplacements commanding all approaching highways from the south and east had been dug in and a Mediterranean grotto had been converted into sleeping quarters for the Wehrmacht soldiers.

Toward evening orders were received that the company would move on. The convoy proceeded in a northeasterly direction to the town of Northweiler where we set up for the night. The CP was located in a hunting lodge which had large number of antlers on the walls. Next morning many of the jeeps had acquired new decorations.

A group of about a dozen German prisoners including one SS trooper were taken here and became a problem. Transportation to bring them back to a rear area was not available and there was a lively discussion as to whether they should be dealt with on the spot. Six Russian slave laborers who were found in the town were all for settling the transportation problem immediately and volunteered to do the digging. After a while a truck came and took the prisoners away.

In Northweiler the men were informed that from now on they were "Task Force Custer" and that the job was to travel like hell and mop up behind the armor.

Next morning the company traveled north to Bundenthal. On the outskirts of the city an entire section of houses were cleared out so that the area could be used as a CP. The men toured the barnyards for eggs and acquired a reasonable number which were promptly hard boiled so that they could be used to supplement the K rations that were our daily diet on the move.

A catch of Nazi rifles were found in one house and the bolts were removed and the rifles piled in a stack and burned. On the roads leading into the town a continuous stream of Nazi civilian refugees towing their belongings in small carts came by. Here in Germany we could see being enacted a replica of what had occurred in Holland and France, in Poland and in Russia, with the exception that here no American planes strafed the fleeing civilians, no tanks ran them down.

This was to be only a temporary stopping place. In an hour orders were received to continue on. All piled into the jeeps, on the trailers and the trucks and again we started northward toward Busenberg.

At the crossroads southeast of Dahn where the column turned east toward Busenberg the men saw the most gratifying scene of the war. The air corps and our artillery had caught a German convoy fleeing on the road. For miles the landscape was strewn with German dead, swelling horses, overturned vehicles, and mountains of rubble. Tank-dozers were moving down the road to push burned out vehicles into ditches so that they could not obstruct traffic. Guns of all kinds and Heine equipment ranging from complete kitchens to radio repair parts littered the fields. Every imaginable type of equipment could be picked up and the men took advantage of the situation to obtain a few Nazi souvenirs. Here on the road all could see the power of American weapons and the strength of American men. If the Nazis thought they were invincible, then indeed we were supermen because here was complete destruction and devastation-ruthless, efficient, and complete.

In high spirits the men continued on to the next town.

Busenberg had been shelled and rubble was strewn in the streets and on the highways. So many troops were moving forward that the road became congested and we were forced to pause for an hour in the town. The day had been fairly warm and the roads dusty to the men scouted out the cellars and found some cooling white wine with which to quench our thirst. Here, too, one of the men acquired an accordion and from then on we had music as we traveled.

Even the mules who all this time had accompanied the rear elements of the column were interested in the spectacle of ruin and desolation and appeared to sympathize with the cows who were wandering forlornly through the town.

After a time the road cleared and we proceeded. More death and destruction. More Heine bodies in the roads and in the fields. More burned out houses.

While traveling along the A-T platoon had an interesting experience. The platoon was following the leading jeep and the trucks in which they were riding had stopped in order to permit the rest of the convoy to catch up. One of the men looked out and thought he saw one of the "dead" leries move. Lt. Price left the truck and walked up the road to investigate. There were three bodies lying in the road and as the Lieutenant came near the German soldiers started raving in German. Another German soldier at that moment came out of a nearby house waving a white flag. When the men saw this they grabbed their weapons and piled out of the truck to assist the Lieutenant. The house was searched and a total of 30 Heine P Was were captured, excluding one who was found in a bed dead.

The convoy continued onward and met up with elements of the 103rd Division and elements of an armored unit. All three convoys proceeded three abreast along the road for about a mile. As the convoys moved forward a number of incidents occurred.

At one spot our medics stopped to treat a German soldier who was badly wounded and had come out of the woods. The men wondered why they didn't dispose of him but all realized in their hearts that the humane American way was correct. At another spot the Negro soldiers who were part of the convoy that was moving along with us gathered around Pogorel who was playing the accordion and joined in a few songs.

In this vicinity too, some of the men picked up Jerry transportation and used it instead of walking on foot. A few rode Jerry horses. Sgt. Jones of Communications platoon, picked up a Volkswagen with knock-kneed front wheels which went forward although it appeared to be going sideways. A few trucks which were in running order were picked up and the men rode instead of walking.

Late that afternoon we came to our destination-OberSchlettenbach. We had pushed through the vaunted Siegfried line with its dug in pill boxes, its dragon teeth, lanes of fire carved out of the hills. We had mopped up the meager remnants of Nazi strength which remained after our tanks and planes and guns had dealt with them. We had traveled long and far and fast and everyone was ready for a rest.

The A-T platoon set up in the woods outside of town. One squad set up a road block that night. The other two squads were to set up the next morning. The men were tired of K rations and a detail was sent out to gather up what food could be had. The booty consisted of three geese and three rabbits to which were added potatoes, bread and coffee from reserve stocks and A-Tate well that night.

The other platoons proceeded into town to find accommodations. Regimental headquarters was also located in that town and billets were scarce. The men crowded into what houses were available and soon slept the sleep of the just.

O. REST, RECUPERATION, REGROUPING, AND REORGANIZATION

Nine days were spent in Oberschlettenback. It was a period in which the men had few duties, and for the most part it was a period of recuperation and rest.

The town itself was not very clean in contrast to most of the German towns the company had been in. On orders from the AMG representative, the Burgomeister soon had a group of women out cleaning the streets and raking up the dirt. The houses too, were for the most part old, and the beds dilapidated and dirty. Latrines were inadequate so outdoor latrines had to be dug. One of the A & P platoon quarters was on the side of a hill so precipitous that when a man urinated he endangered the passerby down below.

The inhabitants showed little reaction to the occupation by the Americans. A few who sidled up to an American soldier seemed to have but one idea- to impress him with the fact that he had relatives in America and that it was just wonderful having Americans here instead of Russians. Very soon even these limited conversations with the inhabitants were prohibited. The non-fraternization order was read to the men and for once the men found it fairly easy to comply. There wasn't a good looking woman in the town.

While the other platoons were acquiring quarters in town the A-T platoon set up three road-blocks. One was set up along the road in the midst of the wreckage. Here the men dug in their gun and kept on the look out for German soldiers in civilian clothes. There was not a great deal of work for the men to do. In the adjacent fields the horses were still hitched to the Jerry wagons. The men felt that the dumb animals were not responsible for the war and they did not want to suffer. The horses were unhitched and were set out to graze.

A good deal of time was spent by the men in trying to get some of the Heine transportation to working. S/Sgt Hersh found a motorcycle that went after a fashion but which was soon wrecked. Pfc Jepson and Pfc Zukunft located a car and after working for a few days got it to go. Like many a Nazi, however, the car proved troublesome and had to be abandoned. Pfc LeFever found a bicycle in the woods and this afforded more dependable transportation than the motorized equipment. Cpl Ringlein found a saddle and since horses were plentiful soon had good transportation as well as exercise.

Horse shoe pitching was the great divertissement. A whole wagon load of horseshoes was found. The men set up a court and there was keen competition.

At the other road block the men built a small house to keep out the rain, established their own burgomeister to govern their village and sat down to enjoy the peaceful life. The quiet was broken only by the sound of two Nazi NCOs shouting "kamerad" who were coming in to surrender.

The A & P platoon also was called upon to do some work in the line of their duties. A number of wonderfully built Siegfried line pill boxes had to be blown. Here Pfc Stein was hit in the chin by a wandering fragment and spent three days in the hospital. Pfc W. Jones developed rheumatism and also went to the hospital. The men thought the nurses must have been very pretty because they did not return. But the biggest event in the platoon occurred when Pfc Johnson who had spent 32 months overseas was sent home on a 90-day furlough.

The days passed uneventfully from a military viewpoint but interesting things did happen. The 25th was Palm Sunday, a day of quiet and peace. In the afternoon services were held by Chaplain Potter and were very well attended. The Medics had an invitation to dinner from the 122 Medical Battalion and had a wonderful meal consisting of chicken, mashed potatoes, beans, coffee and peaches.

A rumor, which was later confirmed, began to circulate that there was a possibility that the Battalion might be attached to a mechanized force to go out on a special mission. Nothing came of it, however.

The mess hall was located in the woods about three quarters of a mile from town and everyone enjoyed a stimulating walk before each meal ifhe wanted to eat. Others were more fortunate rode the jeeps out to the mess hall.

As is usual, the rest period also developed into a period of "chicken". The men were ordered to police up the rubble left by the Heines and all felt resentful. "Was this occupation Army training?" "Why don't the Jerries clean up their own crap?" "We are fighting soldiers". But the resentment didn't last long. The news coming in over the radio was wonderful. The third Army had pushed over the Rhine. Gen. Eisenhower announced a new tank. Gen. Patton was going like the whirlwind. A German general was loose in our area and whosoever found him would get a thirty-day furlough in the states.

Even the rain that came on the morning of the 26th did not dampen the men's spirits. The radio section went out and found a radio for the Colonel. The next day clean clothes were issued all around. On the 28th an announcement told us that the 232nd Inf., was part of the XXI Corps. These days were alternated fair and rain with the sun playing hide and seek in the clouds.

The 29th was a rainy day and not much took place except a staff meeting of the officers. In the evening the officers who had all received their X rations had a party as did the Medics who had not received anything but who knew how to combine grain alcohol and grape juice.

P. THE FLUFFY-DUFFY QUARTER HOUR

The officers' party was made memorable by the fact that the first public performance of the Fluffy-Duffy Quarter Hour was given there. The Fluffy-Duffy boys, all members of the Communications platoon, had originated their program in Bezange, had worked on it on the highways and in every town thereafter. Parts of the program had been piped via the telephone lines to the men at outposts and in the CO during lulls in the fighting. To the men Fluffy-Duffy was a voice from home, exaggerated and burlesqued, but the outgrowth of their own experiences and the expression of their own feelings.

At the time that the performance was given for the officers the instrumentation consisted of Pfc Cook on the guitar, Pfc Pogorel on the accordion, Pfc Pratt on the mouth organ. S/Sgt Genova, played the spoons for rhythm. Pfc Durburow was master of ceremonies.

The show opened with the theme song:

"Music and fun for quarter of an hour,
Listen to the charm of the Fluffy-Duffy hour.
For Fluffy-Duffy flour,
Yeh, man, that's what we're praisin"

The "praisin" came on the downward inflection and immediately the instrumentalists broke into the next song which was usually "Skeeter on my Peter" which was the Colonels' favorite. Most verses went

"Among the maggots and the flies
There my little Willie lies
He died once early in the fall
Every evenin in the dark
While strolling in the park
You can hear my little Willie call;

Oh, knock him off,
Oh, knock him off,
There's a skeeter on my peter
Knock him off'

Another favorite was "Nineteen Years Old", the story of the GI who wooed and wed a girl on a short furlough and his disillusionment on the "primus nocti". It was subtitled "The Evils of a Hasty Marriage"

"Out on the carpet her glass eye did roll
Out came her false teeth and my blood ran cold
She took off her wig and 10 and behold-
Says I, "You're some daisy for nineteen years old!"

For comedy relief from the pseudo-tragic affairs of the sad GI the next number was usually "Animal Fair" with sound effects:

"I went to the animal fair
The birds and the beasts were there
The gay raccoon by the light of the moon
Was combing her auburn hair.

The monkey he got drunk
He climbed the elephant's trunk
The elephant sneezed and fell on his knees
And that was the end of the monk"

Pogorel would interlard current events into this number as well as imaginary happenings to persons in the audience and would follow the song with his "sp???"

"See the giant doo-doo bird
He jumps from precipice to precipice
And back to piss again"

"See Sultana, direct from the 43 Frisco Fair,
Shakes everything going up,
Shakes everything going down,
And when it meets in the middle it's like jelly on a plate"
Get away you children and let the Rainbow soldiers in!"

Cooke would then step on the imaginary platform and both would render, "The Talking Blues".

"If you want to go to heaven
Tell you how to do it
Grease your feet
In mud and suet
Slide down the devil's hand
Right into the promised land.

(Talked in a
Drawl)

Now take it easy
Kind of greasy

Go easy,
Slip'n and slid'n
Phillips 66!

Went down the hen house the other night
Was so dark I needed a light,
Fooled around, got hold of a goose,
White man said, "Boy, tum him loose",

(Talked)

Jumpin' gullies
Dodgin' bullets
Tear'n up rose bushes
Couldn't run
OhMan!

Pfc Duborow would then put on two skits with sound effects. One the "Indianapolis Speedway Race" and the other "I Fit the War". The latter was the story of Drusenheim and the wire crew. Through snow and ice "the shells came in and the wire ran out". Men got hurt but still the wire crew kept going until finally the line was in and then - - some staff officers got on the line and bat the breeze about how comfortable their quarters were and how good the X rations felt.

Two additional skits that were sometimes given were "Take Me Back to Tulsa" and "Lady Taking a Bath". For the performance in Ober Schlettenbach a new song was polished up, "Little Liza Jane":

"I got a gal in Baltimore
Little Liza Jane.
She's nothing but a dirty old whore
Little Liza Jane.
She has boobies, oh so nice
Little Liza Jane.
Also bedbugs, clap and lice
Little Liza Jane.

The song goes on to describe the other virtues and deficiencies of Little Liza Jane far into the night or until the liquor gives out. Intermingled with these numbers were other favorites that the audience requested, hill-billy tunes and American Folk songs.

P. THE REST COMES TO AN END

It continued to rain on the 30th but at lunch time two Red Cross workers, one from Brooklyn, came out and brought doughnuts for the men. In the afternoon three performers put on a swell show. The show was well attended despite the drizzle and the men enjoyed it thoroughly.

The A&P platoon had built an outdoor shower in the morning and the men were vying with each other about who was to take the first bath. Before the water could get heated up they were ordered to take it down. The men knew then that the rest period was over. Unknown to them, in the morning a quartering party had gone out. Again everyone was curious about our

next destination. The company was formally alerted to move out and all began to pack their things for the big trip ahead. Excitement began to mount as rumors began to spread that we were to cross the Rhine. Here was a moment that everyone had been waiting for. What part of the front we were to hit, no one knew, although everyone took a tum at guessing. The company went to bed that night wondering what the tomorrow would bring.

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IV PURSUIT THROUGH GERMANY

A. CROSSING THE RHINE

The morning of 31 March was clear but cold. The men had a hot breakfast, checked their quarters to see that no equipment was being left behind, and then mounted their vehicles preparatory to moving out. After a considerable delay the column was formed into serials at about 1030 and the company was again on the move. The IP at Erlanbach was crossed at 1100.

The journey to the Rhine was for most men a kaleidoscope of town, people, countryside, and the winding road that moved past in rapid succession. The entire period merged into a confused impression bordering on the unreal. The first large town that the convoy passed through was Landau and there the people seemed cold and hostile. They stood with immobile faces watching the jeeps and trucks go by and not a hand waved. From the front of every house hung the white banner of surrender, usually made from a sheet or a pillow case or a towel.

From Landau the convoy moved north through Neustadt, Bad Durkheim, and Grunstadt. Some of the towns had been hit by shellfire. In one, a factory that stood by the road at one time was now a mass of rubble. One of the towns seemed to have escaped any large scale destruction.

As the convoy turned east toward the Rhine the men riding in the trucks witnessed an accident to one of the cooks in A company. Pfc Blue had acquired a German motorcycle and was riding ahead of the convoy to clear the path for the oncoming trucks. In order to avoid hitting a pedestrian, he had to swerve suddenly, the motor bike hit a stone in the road and he was thrown. When the convoy came up to him German civilians had carried him to the side of the road, and an American medic was administering first aid.

The column moved on toward the Rhine at Worms. Guides had been posted to direct the convoy across one of the four bridges which spanned the river but the convoy never found the guides and relied on information furnished by the MPs. The crossing itself was uneventful. An excellent pontoon bridge had been put across the swiftly flowing Rhine. The river itself was neither wide nor impressive. The men seemed to feel that advertizing had done a good job for the Rhine because certainly the Hudson was much wider and more beautiful. The column moved smoothly across the bridge. On the other side there were German anti-aircraft guns in position with the ammunition still in place ready for instantaneous action. Ten yards away were the American AA guns. The Heines had pulled out in such a hurry that they had no had time to dismantle the gun, or demolish it. The tail end of the column was over the bridge and "Deep in the heart of Germany" at 1450. All the men knew that now there was no turning back. Units that had crossed the river were in for a finish fight. There could be no retreat back across the Rhine.

B. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

But it was not retreat that was the immediate problem once the convoy was on the other side of the river. Instructions as to route and destination had already been changed once and now no information was available on the route to follow because the guides had not been met. The convoy advanced some distance away from the river onto a level stretch of highway and there stopped to await the arrival of further instructions. Where do we go from here was the big question.

The weather had turned colder during the afternoon and the men built fires along the side of the road. Some ate their K rations. The radio was turned on to try to pick up some news of Patton's army. Many just sat and waited. The wait was amusing enough. Civilians on bicycles passed by. Women pushing baby carriages. A number of groups of emancipated laborers. A queer character who said he was a bootblack and offered to shine shoes for an American cigarette. Groups of children trooped out of the nearby village to stare wide eyed at the terrible monsters standing in the road until one with more courage than the rest advanced and asked for "chocolate". On being refused, he turned and sat with the rest.

Among the freed workers were two groups who stopped to talk. One group consisted of three Greeks. Pfc. Karadimos could speak Greek to the wonderment of the workers and there ensued a very dynamic discussion, complete with arm wavings, of which not a soul other than Karamidos could understand a word but which seemed to be on a very friendly basis indeed. The other group were Italians who blessed us fervently and wished us the best of luck. From all appearances at that time, we were going to need it too, because off to our right flank at a considerable distance we could hear single shots and intermittent bursts of machine gun fire. Where the front lines were was not known but they seemed not very far away.

As the men waited they could see the S-2 jeep scurrying back and forth at high speed and presumed that it had gone back to get information. About the fourth time that the jeep moved up to the head of the column the guess was correct because the column again started to move. As we pressed through the town of Densheim we were met by the serial that was to precede us but which had come by a different route. All was straightened out now and the convoy continued in an easterly direction.

As the convoy passed town on this side of the Rhine the people seemed much more pleased to see American soldiers and waved their handkerchiefs at the passing trucks and smiled. Whether the smile was a smile of relief now that the war had passed them and they were still alive and their homes intact or whether they were actually glad to see the men will never be known. Perhaps the P-47s and the bombers that flew overhead and encouraged the men stimulated them into a show of subservience.

On reaching the road junction south of Erbach the convoy turned north for a distance of about 14 miles and then east again to cross the Main River at Worth in total darkness. On reaching the town of Erlenbach on the other side of the river the convoy stopped to check that all were present and the drivers were so tired and sleepy that half of them fell asleep. It began to rain. Our officers had gone back somewhere to get further instructions. A few men ducked into a nearby house which had been abandoned by its former inhabitants. No one knew why we waited although there was some conjecture that we had run off the available maps and were waiting for new overlays to come up. Finally the convoy again moved forward. After about an

hour's travel part of the company arrived at Monchberg at 0130. The convoy had traveled 118 miles that day.

The CP was set up in the Burgomeister's office which came complete with Nazi flags, Nazi emblems and Nazi dirt. The whole mess was removed and the communications and headquarters personnel rolled their blankets out in the rooms on the upper floor and went to sleep. The rest of the men slept in the apple orchard near the edge of town.

C. THE LOST SHEEP

Not everyone in the company could go to sleep, however, Some were still on the highways making frantic efforts to catch up with the column that they had lost. Especially was this true of one jeep belonging to the medics, one of the wire jeeps, and the maintenance 2 ~ ton truck.

In a small town west of the Rhine the medics jeep had had a flat. Because of an obstinate tire rim they took longer than they had expected to replace the tire and when they started out again the convoy was far ahead. Where they traveled that night or how far they do not know. There seemed to be hundreds of strange towns. Towns in which the only language spoken was German. Towns in which not a person was visible. There were also convoys but never the right one. Finally through accident or perseverance or both they met a guide and from then on it was clear sailing.

The odyssey of the wire jeep covered more territory than that of the medics' jeep. The night before the convoy left Ober Schlattenbach the wire jeep burned out a clutch. In order to move all elements forward at the same time the jeep was hitched onto a service company truck which was to tow it to the next stopping place or until such time as it could be repaired.

Soon after the convoy left Ober Schlattenbach the truck had a flat, the first of seven, in the next twenty-four hours. The convoy moved on ahead and after the flat was fixed the service company towing the jeep fell in with a third Battalion convoy which was going in the same direction. Luck stayed with them until they crossed the Rhine then the truck had another flat tire. Various convoys passed as they worked on the tire, Recon, Artillery, other infantry outfits but no 232nd Infantry. Darkness was fast approaching when they met up with a Recon outfit which invited them to spend the night. They woke up the next morning, had a good breakfast and continued on their way until they met a Rainbow guide. "Have you seen anything of our convoy?"

The guide answered that he had waited all night for the convoy but he had not seen it. They continued on down the road and encountered a Regimental Anti-Tank gun and crew that was lost and decided to turn around and head north again. They continued on until in the vicinity of At Schaffenberg they ran into the 45th Division sector. There they visited the office of the G-2 and received directions which turned out to be inaccurate because the situation had changed. The G-2 quarters were only two kilometers from the front lines and from the porch of the house the men had a box seat for the fight that the 157th Infantry was putting up for the next town. Through their glasses they could see a Nazi captain swinging from a tree in the town square. The Nazis had hung him there when he wanted to surrender. After watching the battle for a while the men decided to continue on to try to find the 3rd Division which we were to relieve. They started out and had two more flats on the road. They moved out once more, this time at a fairly rapid pace. Two Nazi jet propelled planes strafed them as they bowled along at 40 miles an hour pace. Pfc

Pogorel shouted to the service truck driver to stop but he didn't hear. Luckily no one was hurt. Finally they came upon elements of the 3rd Division who directed them to Monchberg, where the rest of the company was waiting.

The last of the strayed one was a two and half ton truck carrying men from the Ranger and Security platoons. Soon after the Rhine was crossed the truck collided with an armored car and although no damage was done a little time was spent in getting straightened out again. The truck load of men started after the convoy and when they came to the autobahn thought they saw our trucks turn off onto it. Catching up with the convoy on the autobahn they saw it was part of the 3rd Army so they came back and caught up with a later serial of the 232nd Infantry. Believing that their own serial was up ahead they pulled out of the convoy. However, they took a wrong turn in the road and found themselves in Worms which had been liberated only a short time before and was still hot. Back they went and around dark set up with Major Barrett who had come back from our convoy to get further instructions. The convoys were moving three abreast and when the Major squeezed through a tight spot the truck could not follow. Again they were lost. They traveled until 2200 and decided that it was useless to go further so they stopped at the first house and knocked at the door. To their amazement the old man who answered spoke English well and they moved into the attic for the night. Next morning they continued on the way and caught up with the company about noon.

D. SOME EFFECTS OF NAZI PROPAGANDA

While waiting for further orders and the lost elements to catch up, the men cleaned up and because there was the possibility that we might stay another night, sought billets. Here the radio section encountered an experience that indicates the degree to which Nazi propaganda had indoctrinated even the educated and so-called liberal Germans. Up on the hill from the Burgomeister's office was a clean looking building with a wonderfully constructed antenna extending from the roof. Ideal quarters for the radio section. A quartering party was sent out and finding only an old woman in the house told her that the house was to be used to quarter soldiers and that in accordance with our instructions she could take whatsoever she wanted and leave the house. This she did and about an hour later the radio section drove its jeep into the yard. There they were met by the Catholic priest in the community who told them that it was his house that they had occupied. Knowing that occupation of church property was not in conformance with Army policy they volunteered to find other quarters but priest said that he had moved his things out it would be better if they moved into his house. Why, he wanted to know, did the American soldiers pick on his house? When it was explained it was because of the location and the fine antenna, he was incredulous and persisted in his belief that it was a deliberately planned political move of some sort. Any other explanation was impossible in Germany. The puzzled members of the radio section then saw the priest walk toward the church. It was time for High Mass - - this was Easter Sunday.

At Monchberg the battalion relieved elements of the 3rd Division. The town was a beehive of activity all morning with trucks and other vehicles moving in and out. In the midst of this activity came a long funeral procession with children chanting hymns. Death followed the usual pattern here in contrast to the informality and casualness of a soldier's death in the field.

E. ADVENTURE IN FECHENBACH

At **1100** a meeting of officers was called to receive their field orders and at 1230 foot elements and the advance CP party moved out toward the east. Outside of town the road climbed a steep hill. On reaching the top the entire panorama of the surrounding countryside could be seen. Down below was a swimming pool in a beautiful amphitheater. The Nazis did not do too badly for themselves.

Shortly after noon the CP was established at Fechenbach. The advance party continued east along the river road and by 1540 reported 15 POW's and an advance of a mile and a half. The immediate objectives were Breitenbrunn for C company which was on the left flank and Faulback for B company which was proceeding along the road. A company was in reserve.

In Fechenbach, where the rear CP waited, orders to move up prisoners began to come in. In addition, a group of approximately forty Russian laborers were picked up and brought into the compound that was set up. The German prisoners were all members of the Wehrmacht and after being searched stood coolly waiting their fate, their faces expressionless, their eyes immobile. An SS private was brought in about an hour after the first batch had been collected. Because of the Nazi propaganda lies he was terrified at the treatment that he could expect from the American soldiers. His hands trembled, his eyes rolled wildly in his head and he could hardly stand up. He was backed up against the wall so that he could be searched and was directed to put his hands on his head. Instead of complying he put his hands in front of him in a begging position and began to implore T/4 Gibelman, who was guarding him, for his life. "I have a wife and two children. I was forced into the SS. I have never fired a single shot. Oh, please, please, spare my life." The guard who was searching him began to take off his coat and the prisoner was sure that he was being prepared for execution. He dropped to his knees and began to cry and it was only with considerable difficulty that he could be made to stand up so that he could be searched. The search completed, he was put in a compound with the other prisoners. So this was the vaunted Nazi SS that had terrified Germany. Not so terrible. The GIs who watched this performance turned away in disgust.

The Russians had watched the show with interest but their main concern was the simple problem of eating. All were hungry. A little scouting around among the men brought out a load of dinner K rations which the men cordially disliked, and these were distributed among the Russians. They mastered the intricacies of the packing soon enough and the cheese with bacon that was anathema to the GI was like caviar to them. Better in fact.

A few of the GIs who were just waiting for the column to move explored the town. The city hall had been hit numerous times and was a complete wreck although a few other buildings in the town had not been hit at all. A warehouse was found which contained thousands upon thousands of Nazi gas masks, protective ointment and protective clothing. Obviously, the Jerries were well prepared for gas warfare. Throughout Germany, in fact, every house was found to have a gas mask for every civilian occupancy. Complete preparedness for an eventuality that did not come to pass.

Near the edge of town some children were playing. As they approached they could see that one of the children was trying to pull the cord on a German hand grenade. Across the street was a nun. The men called the nun's attention to what the children were doing and she hurried over and took the children away. Gee, is there no safety anywhere. Even the damned kids have

no sense.

For the first time the convoy was in a town long enough to collect weapons from the civilians. These were piled up near the CP. Shot guns, broken down cameras, antique rifles, useless ammunition. Certainly there were more modern weapons hidden away but it was time to move on and that business could wait the arrival of other troops. Dorfpretzelten had been cleared and the rear elements moved forward. They arrived at 1600, stayed a little more than an hour, and then moved forward again to Faulbach.

F. PRISONERS, CIVILIAN AND MILITARY

At Faulbach reports of enemy troops ahead came in. C company on the left flank met heavy resistance at Breitenbrunn. It was already dark. The town was eerie. On either side of the road huge warehouses with tall blank walls rose like cliffs. To the right was the railroad abutment and the river. The houses were locked, the inhabitants having left to take shelter in one of the wine storage caves in a large warehouse.

C company again reported intense resistance and was told to make maximum use of artillery. In addition, the anti-tank platoon was brought forward and placed 250 rounds of high explosive shells into the town. The ground was soft and the spades drove deep into the ground during the ten minutes that the firing lasted.

While the firing went on the rest of the company sought shelter except the local security and the CP personnel who were up most of the night. Some climbed through windows into the houses, others slept in barns. The communications platoon found an apartment in the wine distillery, the A & P platoon were quartered in a dentist's office. And so to bed.

The next morning after a K ration breakfast, the men came out of their billets to see a large group of German prisoners assembled in what had once been a drinking pavilion. More came in every minute and were searched by the security platoon.

In the afternoon four bedraggled Russian laborers came in, unwashed, unshaven and stinking. One had no shoes. They were segregated from the others and one of the men who could speak Russian questioned them. They told a pitiful tale of overwork, little to eat, beatings and abuse. Elementary toilet articles like soap and razor blades had been denied them for years. They had slept in stables with the horses.

The security platoon obtained food and toilet articles from the German prisoners and gave the Russians a place to wash up in. In an hour four new men emerged. A trifle emaciated but clean looking and intelligent. One still had no shoes but this omission was soon rectified. Soon trucks came up and a large group of German prisoners all sad and disillusioned were loaded into them to be sent to a rear area.

Other prisoners kept coming in and soon there were about a dozen together with a civilian. At first the civilian was kept apart from the others because no one understood the incoherent story that he was trying to tell. Finally, a soldier who spoke German was called over to question the prisoner. "I'm a Nazi," he said. "I want to die. Shoot me." Here he spread his coat apart and thrust out his chest. The puzzled soldiers thought he was crazy and put him in a corner by himself. But he wouldn't stay put. When a guard came over to make him stand in the corner he punched the guard but the four Russians who were standing nearby jumped to the guard's assistance and were ready to finish him then and there. The guards restored order however and put him with the other prisoners. He stood there a short time and then started to run down the

short flight of stairs that led into the road. He had taken only three steps when a well-placed round from a MI hit him in the center of the back of the head and granted him the death he so fervently requested. Here was another aspect of Nazi insanity.

While the security platoon dealt with the prisoners, members of the S-4 party scouted around town for transportation and eggs. They were successful in both searches. Lt. Bowers found a lovely civilian car which he appropriated to his own use and the men found beaucoup eggs. Another group that had gone to visit the boats lying at anchor in the river came back with the story that one of the boats had a hold full of brand new autos, but since no one could think of a way to get them out, they had to be left behind.

One other incident that occurred in this town deserves mention. A priest had several times come up to the road guard and requested permission to go to the next town to administer to the needs of a sick member of his parish. He was refused. A fire fight was going on for the next town and it was impossible to permit anyone on the road. The fourth time he came down the road toward the road guard the German who was shot came catapulting down the steps almost at his feet. He was just in time to administer the last rites.

In the morning B company took Hasselberg and C company secured the town of Breitenbrunn. The rear elements of Headquarters company therefore was able to move eastward to the next town which was Faulbach. They arrived there about 1310 and set up a CP.

A scouting party was sent ahead to check on available crossings of the Main River, which was not far in front. While waiting for a report from this group the company settled down for a rest. The town had electricity, the radios played and the men were happy. The anti-tank platoon prepared a wonderful chicken dinner and had beer to drink with it. Some of the men had fish which were obtained by the use of a hand grenade in the absence of the more usual line and hook.

As the men sat around they saw a whole platoon of Frenchmen marching across the open field to the CP. They had been prisoners of the Germans, and when the Germans fled they had washed, shaved, put on uniforms that they had so carefully preserved and after putting a loaf of bread and a bottle of schnapps into their rucksacks they had come to join the Americans. They were a happy bunch and reported that they had been much better treated than the Russians although all complained about the inadequate diet. The leader of the group was able to give some information about the whereabouts of the German forces, their strength and arms.

That night it rained and it was still raining in the morning as the men prepared to move out. Making an early start the convoy was on the road again at 0620 toward Ober-Wittenbach where the advance CP had set up the night before. The company stayed in Ober-Wittenbach only long enough for the officers to receive their instructions and the convoy was again on the way.

This movement carried the troops across the Main River at Trennfeld and then along Germany's famed Weinstrasse. This was an interesting ride for the motorized group. On either side of the road for miles on were vineyards. In the fields, peasants tended the vines and nowhere was there sight or sound of war. Wars come and wars might go but the need for wine seemed to go on forever.

G. PRELUDE TO WURTZBURG

The convoy arrived at the assembly area in the vicinity of Ober Leinach at 1500. Here the company got a bad break. The town was small and elements of the second Battalion also were to assemble in the area. Colonel Custer tossed for which outfit was to be billeted in town and lost.

Headquarters company and the rest of the battalion there billeted in the woods. The site chosen was on the slope of a hill. Rain had made the road slippery and in one place where there was a rather steep incline it was like a toboggan slide. One jeep at a time raced up to the incline and then with the help of the GIS it was pushed up the hill. Trees and branches were put in the road to provide traction. All the jeeps made it up in good fashion as did the heavier trucks. But the captured vehicles had a more difficult time. Here again American superiority in workmanship and materials stood a practical field test. One Nazi vehicle was burned out and another had to be abandoned at the bottom of the hill.

The camp site was featured by the presence of two large 500 pound Nazi bombs. How they got there in the middle of the woods was a puzzle. As night fell it began to rain and became quite cold. Fires were not permitted because of the likelihood of enemy observation and everyone was uncomfortable. The company was not to sleep in the woods that night, however. As a matter of fact, they were not to sleep at all. At approximately 2000 all were assembled on the road and in the cold and darkness marched along the road to the western outskirts of Wurzburg, where they took shelter in houses for a few hours until dawn.

* * *

V. THE BATTLES OF WURZBURG AND SCHWEINFURT

A. FORWARD INTO BATTLE

The weary doughfeet in the line companies had already marched twelve kilometers in the cold and rain when they arrived in the outskirts of Wurzburg at 0410 on 4 April. The march had been the most miserable one of the entire campaign. Yet at 0445 they were again on the move toward the main part of the town. The medics were unable to bring the aid station forward by truck so they packed the litters and other aid material on their backs and went forward with the line troops.

At 0550 the men crossed the bridge into Wurzburg and turning to the left moved 500 yards along the street bordering on the river to a point under the arch of a bombed out bridge which was to be the CP site for the next few hours. Advance information obtained from Regiment had led the men to believe that only a few snipers would be encountered and that not much resistance was to be expected. Regiment, of course, had not consulted the Germans.

At the bridge crossing a sentry had halted the troops and in response to an inquiry concerning the activity that was going on had answered that his unit had only a few hours before driven an estimated 300 snipers into the part of town that had been allocated to our troops.

The proposed CP had been further up the street than the bombed out bridge. There were mines in the roads and the enemy had zeroed in on that location. The CP was therefore established under the arch of the bridge where there was some cover.

As soon as the group stopped they were immediately the target for small arms fire. Everyone ducked for cover and the "duck shooting" began. The Germans were trying to infiltrate back into the area and the rubble of the bombed out buildings screened their movements and gave them excellent protection. Some tried to cross the ramp of the bridge and were knocked off as they climbed up on the stone parapet. Others circled to the rear through the buildings. Some of our men went in the buildings and fought them off.

One man played "Hit the Nigger" with a Jerry who was in the adjacent building which was separated by only a court yard. The Jerry would put his head up to the window to see what was going on and T/4 Cohen and others would take a shot at him. He would duck and then the men would wait. Soon his head would come up again and the men would fire again. After about five minutes of this his head came up once too often. Our men won the prize.

In the meantime a few Heines had come up along the river bank but these were disposed of with hand grenades. A medic who was with our troops was hit in the rear end, seeming a favorite place for medics to get hit. The Jerry who shot him was caught and killed.

All the while machine gun bullets from across the river were pouring in a continuous stream over the men's heads into the town where the Jerries were located. As the tracers came across it was at first impossible to tell whether it was the fire of friendly or enemy troops but the direction of fire soon reassured everyone ..

Although the situation was pretty serious the CP group and the radio men who were with them were in a jolly mood. A large stock of schaumwein had been found in a nearby tavern and it was really very good. Fully equal to the finest French champagne.

Early in the afternoon the fire fight died out as the line troops pressed forward away from the river. Food and batteries for the radio were requested and these were brought up. On the plaza near the bridge Regiment had established a PW compound and a large group of officers were already in the enclosure. As the jeep bringing the baatteries came to the bridge they were stopped by the MPs to permit an estimated 400 German prisoners to march across.

About 1500 the CP was moved forward to a large building in the northern part of the city. As the column moved forward toward their new CP they could see the indescribable damage that 14 bombing missions plus our artillery had caused. Hardly a house was habitable. Most were but rubble in holes in what once were cellars. Many still burned from the recent shelling. Hollow shells that had once been beautiful buildings stood sentry duty over the empty tree lined streets. Wurzburg had once been the pride of the Rhineland, one of the most beautiful cities in Germany. It had been noted for its beer, its beautiful women, its castles and its wide streets. Alles kaput!

B. PRELUDE TO THE BATTLE OF THE BIG BUILDING

The building into which the entire battalion moved that afternoon was one of the few which remained habitable in the city. It was a tremendously large building which had housed the Nazi Regional Labor Ministry and had also served as a telephone control and communications center.

The companies were deployed as follows: A company was on the first floor; C company and the Battalion Aid station were on the second floor although originally the aid station was on the first floor; B company and Headquarters company were on the third floor and D company was on the fourth floor.

Jeeps and trucks were parked near the front of the building and in a rear courtyard. Guards were posted inside the front door and at the rear exit. There was intermittent sniper fire coming from all sides. The men were so tired however that many just rolled out their bedrolls on the cold floor and slept there.

C. THE REAR CP MOVES FORWARD

As the forward CP moved into the Arbeits Amt building the rear CP moved from the west suburb of Wurzburg to some buildings a block or two away from the river near the temporary CP under the bridge. Billets of a sort were found for the men. The maintenance truck had had a little difficulty getting down off the hill near Ober Leinach in the dark of the morning and was covered all over with mud. It seems that the trailer had hit a rock coming down the hill and had turned over spewing tools and maintenance parts in all directions. For two hours these parts and tools had been picked out of the mud in the darkness and rain. The truck then had to go back up the hill to get a trailer that the Colonel had left behind but the road was so slippery that this was impossible. The motor maintenance crew had therefore slept in the cold and rain the previous night, a fact about which they complained bitterly, until they were told that no one else had slept at all, and they had finally joined up with the rear CP elements when they moved across the river. The men got a good natured kidding about the condition of their vehicle. Finally, all went to bed; the rear group to sleep through the night; the forward CP to have nightmares.

D. THE BATTLE FOR THE ARBEITS AMT

The men inside the Arbeits Amt building were not the only ones who wanted to sleep. As darkness fell a German soldier with a bed roll under his arm calmly walked up the front steps of the building apparently with the intention of sleeping there for the night. The Kentucky boys in A company resented the intrusion of this Prussian revenuer and treated him to a dose of lead poisoning. The body was thrown from the building so that it would not block the entrance.

A group of Germans had also filtered across the street to the protection of a sizable building there. Artillery fired was called for and although the building was only ten yards away from where our men were it was hit directly with the first volley. The building in which our men were located received a rain of fragments but the only damage was to one jeep which was parked outside and which received a hit in one tire. The group of snipers was of course eliminated.

At 0100 a patrol went out to investigate a building that was suspected of being used as a pillbox. They returned about an hour and a half later and reported that there was no pillbox or krauts but only rabbits, guinea pigs and laboratory equipment but it was plenty creepy walking through the silent streets.

Shortly afterward the guard at the entrance saw a few men push one of the jeeps away from the building and on down the street. In the darkness he couldn't see who it was but since it was right under the guns of our men he presumed that it was GIs who were pushing one of the vehicles that had gotten hit. It later turned out to be the jeep that belonged to the Intelligence Section. It was found intact next morning but all personal possessions had been taken from it. As the Heines were pushing the jeep away Lt. Stanley walked right past them practically brushing their shoulders as he walked into the building. Not a shot was fired nor was either party aware of the other. Not content with this nifty exploit a few of the Heines returned to attempt to steal some of D company's K rations. Here they were not so lucky because they were met with a hail of lead.

At about 0500 those on the lower floors of the building were awakened by the sound of Heine boots tramping outside the window. There were a few shots and then a loud voice

shouted, "Come out, American soldiers. We have you covered. There is no hope for you." As he finished speaking all hell broke loose. It was that Heine's last speech.

There must have been a number of surprised Heines in the area. The building house the entire Battalion and all hell let loose at the same instant with all their weapons: heavy machine guns, light machine guns and rifles. It closely resembled a field demonstration of battalion fire power at Camp Gruber.

The volley from the building received answering fire from the Krauts and a fire fight ensued. The Jerries were using Panzerfausts and the medics who were on the first floor had a narrow escape when one came through the window of the adjacent room and knocked plaster fragments all around the room. A clothes closet that was knocked over narrowly missed Cpl. Critz, Capt. Allen went out to see if there were any casualties and later stated that Capt. Lieber and one soldier had been hit by the shell. They were in the room in which the rocket landed. Immediately the medics moved the first aid station upstairs to the second floor into a room that had heavy steel shutters and thick cement walls. They treated a total of five officers and eleven men as a result of this engagement.

At 0800 a group of Germans walked across the open square which was about 50 yards from the building. Not a shot was fired until they were clear of intervening obstacles, then one well-placed volley eliminated them.

In the attic of the building another interesting scene was taking place. On receiving a report that one of the jeeps had been hit, Lt. Sawyer came forward to see what he could do about it. He brought some of the rear echelon up with him including the first sergeant. They came up to the building and were a little unnerved to see tanks parked in front of the building firing right down the street, but after Lt. Sawyer examined the jeep they went into the building. They learned that the CP group had gone upstairs to the attic. There they found the Colonel, Major Barrett, some communications and intelligence personnel and the liaison officer. Through the roof where the tiles had been knocked out, they could see some Heines coming up over a railroad trestle about 600 yards away. The Colonel organized a firing line, consisting of one Thompson sub machine gun, a few carbines, four MIs and Major Barrett's pistol. Ready on the right. Ready on the left. Ready on the firing line. Heine is coming up. Heine is up. FIRE. And down went the Heine on the firing line. No one knows that the final score was because the Major insisted on scoring points for his pistol marksmanship despite the range. Everyone but the Jerries had fun.

As the morning wore on sniper fire abated until around noon time it finally ceased. A group that went out to investigate the source of sniper fire from the vicinity of a hospital found a parking lot filled with small trucks and a number of these were picked up for the use of the troops. The Rangers who had been without any mechanized transportation picked up a large enclosed van that was beautifully fitted inside and converted it into a hotel on wheels. Even the first sergeant had a small truck for his office equipment and bedroll.

F. WURZBURGER MISCELLANY

During the day and night in which most of the action took place there were a hundred minor incidents. Most of these are lost because ducking sniper shots is not conducive to minor matters that seem very very trivial at the moment. A few can be told.

There was the incident of the drunken Jerry soldier who came cavorting down the streets singing at the top of his lungs. As he came through the line of GIs they paddled him with their rifle butts but nothing daunted he went on singing the glories of the bottle of wine and the Third Reich. He was finally taken off to the PW cage.

There is the story of the narrow escape of one of the Anti-Tank trucks. Near the river there was an archway over the street, part of the approach to the bridge. Shellfire had set it ablaze but the fire was well over the street level and it was the only approach to the rear CP at the time. Trucks and jeeps had been coming through all morning. When the trucks driven by Pfc Zumares came through the vibration caused the burning wreckage to fall. Just as in a movie thriller, he accelerated his truck as he heard the sounds made by the rending timber and the burning mass of wreckage just missed the truck by a few feet. Sparks and burning fragments showered the truck but there was no damage.

Other scenes were also reminiscent of a movie serial. At dusk on the night of the 5th, two Bed Check Charlies came over to see how the pontoon bridge was doing just as one of our wire jeeps was coming across. The ack-ack opened up. The planes came closer and closer. Our heroes sped across the bridge. At the last moment the planes were shot down. No one was hurt.

The scene that the men liked best, however, was that of the Heine prisoners loaded down with American ammunition being used to hand carry mortar and rifle ammunition to our front line troops.

Other less exciting events made Wurzburg memorable. T/4 Gibleman shaved in champagne because there was no water available. The other men, with more sense perhaps had a better idea what to do with the champagne.

Some of the men went around exploring after things quieted down and were impressed by the wide streets and the wreckage of once beautiful buildings. In back of one of these buildings in the vicinity of the cemetery they found four or five trenches six feet deep and about 100 feet long. A passerby told them that they were mass graves which had been dug out during the bombings and he pointed out that some were already filled in. They were told that as a result of fourteen bombings approximately 13,000 civilian casualties had been caused in the city.

Nearby was a large modern school house which the man visited. The building had been damaged but the lower floors were intact. Completely equipped physics laboratories were found which were reported to be as good as those in most colleges in the States. In every classroom

hung a picture of der Fuehrer. Since these pictures did not beautify the rooms, they were removed. In the basement was a collection of uniforms and weapons from every nation in Europe and bunks for about 75 persons. What the uniforms and weapons collection was for could not be detected. Upstairs the men found a beautiful gym with modern equipment. The physical plant in the German school system as obviously excellent.

G. ON THE ROAD AGAIN

When the men returned from their exploring it was time to push out again. At 1600 the line troops marched out of Wurzburg and as they approached the northern outskirts of town deployed in skirmish lines. The rolling countryside afforded clear vision and from the radio jeep in the center of the advance CP group most of the action was visible.

A shot was heard on the flank. All the men hit the ground. A radio call came in for a TD to come forward. The TD came up, fired a few shots to flush out the snipers and then the men got up again and advanced. This was repeated several times. In the distance every movement stood out in sharp detail; the forward movement of the TD; the movement of the gun barrel as it drew down on the target; the puff of smoke that accompanied the shot. The again our troops moving forward.

The troops moved in a northerly direction all afternoon encountering spotty resistance that was easily silenced. The only casualties resulted from a short mortar round. The shell went only about 75 yards and then exploded killing a forward observer and wounding the artillery crew chief.

It began to drizzle as night approached and the Colonel obtained permission for the troops to billet in Rimpar, the nearest town. As the troops moved into town a few of our shells dropped into the houses not too far away. It was later discovered that this was merely exploratory firing caused by the sound of the tanks which were thought to be Heines. It made the men pretty uncomfortable however for the few minutes it took to radio back the cease fire order.

This town was different from any that the men had previously been in. The towns people seemed genuinely happy to see American troops. They cheered and waved at the men. They seemed to think they were being liberated rather than conquered by the enemy.

Shelter was taken in the few available houses and accommodations, though not good, were far better than having to sleep in the field. Some of the CP group slept in a pantry surrounded by jars of jam. A few of them accepted the hospitality of the woman in whose house they were quartered. She fed them eggs, bread and jam and coffee and they washing it all down with the few remaining bottles of champagne.

Three of the men in the radio section who chanced to step out of the door almost fell into the arms of three Heines who were promptly captured. A short time later a group of about 50 Germans came marching down the street with their weapons and equipment. They marched past the CP, did a to the rear march after going about forty yards and the started to come back. One of the jeeps turned on its bright lights putting them in the center of an impromptu stage and they all surrendered and were marched off to the PW cage. When they got to the place that should have been the PW cage there was no cage so they were all locked into the cellar of the CP for the night and a guard put over them. In the morning a PW cage was set up and they were moved there.

The men rose at 0500 the next morning which was the 7th of April. The convoy crossed the IP at 0730 and moved toward Thungen. The hills were steep and the men held on to the jeeps

going up hill. At about 1400 the troops arrived in Thungen but did not remain there. The most noteworthy scene in this town was the old castle, complete with moat, in which a Baron lived. The Regimental CP was later established in this building which had many antiques and was like an old museum.

The column moved on, now turning northeast. After a few hours it arrived in Binsfeld. The march was uneventful.

The CP had been established only a few minutes when a very excited member of the Security platoon came in saying that he had captured five very important German officers, probably Generals. Major Barrett went out to investigate and found they had brought in five members of the local constabulary resplendent in their official dress uniforms which they had put on with the express purpose of being all dressed up for the arrival of the Americans.

One Kraut prisoner however was brought in who had something much more interesting to say. He reported that the Jerries were digging in an MIR between this town and Schweinfurt and that we could expect to encounter serious resistance.

Across the street from the CP in this town was a wonderful bus and every man that approached it immediately saw in it the solution to the transportation problem for his platoon. Unfortunately, the bus had a broken axle so all were disappointed.

Next morning at 0700 the troops again moved out toward the northeast. First Battalion was moving behind the troops of the Second Battalion. The movement went forward without incident until the outskirts of Arnstein were reached. Here the 2nd Battalion was held up by strong resistance in the town. After waiting a few hours the 1st Battalion was ordered to outflank the town to the right. Our troops circled to the high ground to the south of the city and then advanced northeast to assist in taking the town. While they were advancing across an open space, 15 rounds of mortar fire came in from 2nd Battalion weapons. The motor column had already circled beyond the troops and from an elevation on the road had a box seat to watch our own troops under fire. The wire crew immediately hooked into the telephone wire and called back a cease fire order. It was fortunate that during the entire move wire was laid as troops advanced so that constant telephone communication was available from the forward CP to the rear.

A number of Heine prisoners were brought in that had been captured at an anti-tank station. Some were less than 15 years old. Three of the prisoners were badly shot up and while being treated in the aid station they stated that they had been in the army only three weeks. Hitler was getting hard up.

The column pushed on. B company went into a town accompanied by four TD's and captured an entire battalion of krauts. Some of the German officers had their wives with them. Toward evening the column reached the stopping point for the day-an assembly area north of Brebersdorf. It began to rain so as many men as could be accommodated went into town, which also housed the 2nd Battalion, and slept wherever they could find shelter.

H. DEATH IN THE AFTERNOON

The next morning was cold and clear. The convoy moved out at 0700 and progressed slowly along the road until a roadblock, consisting of perhaps 100 yards of fallen trees, was encountered. There was no way of circling through the woods, and booby traps were suspected in the area. The column therefore turned back toward the town that it had just left and then took

off across the field in order to get around the area.

To the south the 2nd Battalion was having a fire fight in the town of Egenhausen. To the north the enemy were reported entrenched in the vicinity of Obbach. To the northeast aerial photographs showed that 25 anti-aircraft positions were located in an area 1000 meters square.

The column advanced down a steep hill and out onto an open field. Here the large truck in which the Rangers were riding bogged down for a few minutes but continued on again. The lead vehicle was climbing the hill on the other side of the valley. The road was narrow and at the top there was a right turn onto the flat plateau on top. The jeep rounded the turn into the open field, a distance of perhaps 50 yards. From the woods to the right front came several bursts of machine gun fire. Two lieutenants who were in the vehicles were killed. The jeep began to bump. The two enlisted men jumped from the jeep and hit the ground. There they lay immobile while the German armored vehicle hidden in the forward edge of the nearby woods raked them with fire. Neither S/Sgt Dillon nor Pfc Evans was hit although S/Sgt Dillon's glasses were knocked off by a bullet and it was later discovered that his eyes had been burned. For an hour they lay there praying until the TD's came forward and knocked out the Heine vehicle.

The remainder of the convoy then proceeded to the left across the open field in the direction of the nearest woods. Mortar and artillery fire fell on the forward elements entering the woods and Us. Bertone and Oliver and an enlisted man were hit. The column stopped. Most of the vehicles were in plain sight of the German AA positions which were on the right. Why they didn't fire at the column is one of the puzzles of the war.

One reason may have been that one of our observation planes was flying overhead despite intense AA fire. The plane was trying to locate the Heine positions and in sort of game fashion was flying an irregular course between Sommersdorf, Egenhausen and Brebersdorf. He would fly over Sommersdorf to locate the positions. The AAs would fire at him so he would turn south toward Egenhausen where the 2nd battalion was fighting. There machine guns would open up on him so he would turn northwest toward Brebersdorf and as he came over our positions he could flap his wings before proceeding back to Sommersdorf. "Nothing to it," was the message to the men. The third or fourth time round German fighter planes came after him but he eluded them and got away. A short time thereafter a number of flights of our fighter bombers came over and bombed and machine gunned the positions that the observation plane had found. They also used rockets and it was a magnificent spectacle to watch the planes come at their prey, loosed their rockets and then continue on in all guns spitting a hail of lead at the Germans.

Meanwhile we were clay pigeons if the Germans sought to shoot at us so the men found what shelter they could in a gully and behind the reverse slope of the hill.

A number of Germans came out of the woods about 1000 yards to the right rear and some of the Ranger platoon moved forward and opened fire on them. One was hit and a jeep went forward to pick him up and to accept the surrender of the remaining three or four Heines. As the jeep approached, however, they took off in the woods.

At long last the column began to move forward again. It went through one wooded area, skirted another and finally came back out on the road leading into Sommersdorf. There the convoy stopped for a short time and the men ate their K rations. From Sommersdorf it was possible to see our 4.2 mm mortars pour white phosphorous shells on a German convoy that was pulling out of the next town - Euerbach. The town was burning brightly and in the gathering dusk the landing of the shells was plainly visible. Across the street from the CP prisoners began to collect in the garden next to a house. Most were from anti-aircraft troops. They stated that

they had been fighting as infantry troops.

Some of our troops that were fighting for Euerbach ran into fire from 2nd Battalion cannon company and had a hot time until a message could be radioed back to cease all artillery fire. Finally in a darkness lit only by the burning buildings the convoy moved into town at 2300.

To the right of the road at the intersection leading into town was a burning TD which the Heines had knocked out with a panzerfaust. The eight men in the TD had been evacuated to a nearby building by the medics while under continuous fire. One medic had been injured in the process. The medics jeep which was called forward to take care of these men also ran into small arms fire and four times the medics had to hit the dirt on the way in. On one occasion they piled out of the jeep so fast that they forgot to stop it and then they had a mad scramble to catch up with the still moving jeep.

The burned out TD, the smell of phosphor, the burning buildings made the men curse the confounded Heines who persisted in a war that was long lost.

I. HELL AT NIGHT

Some men went to sleep at once. Some preferred to get something to eat first. The men in the A & P platoon preferred to eat and Sgt. Miller and Sgt. Mulvey prepared a meal for the platoon. The men sat down and completed their meal and then the two sergeants sat down to eat themselves. Heine shells began to whistle all around and they dashed for the cellar. The shelling stopped and they came up to continue their meal. After taking a few mouthfuls, a shell came through the wall and fragments went through Sgt. Miller's canteen cup and broke the plate from which he was eating. Enough is enough. Both ran down to the cellar to stay.

Meanwhile the Communications platoon had gone to sleep. Around 0230 they heard a loud noise and suddenly there was cross ventilation in two rooms. They dashed downstairs and one of them located a potato cellar to which all retired for the night.

Out in the street in front of the A & P platoon was a truck full of ammunition. Shell fragments and pieces of broken tile from the roofs were flying in the street but Cpl. Wylie ran for the truck and drove it to a place of comparative safety although the adjoining building was burning brightly and the truck was full of shrapnel holes.

The most interesting time of all was had by Chaplain Kidd. After being assigned quarters he said his customary prayers and went to bed. He hung his trousers and field jacket over a chair next to the bed so that he could easily locate them in the morning. And then he slept the sleep of the just. True there was some racket outside but it was just a vague dream for the Chaplain was a very tired man that day. Next morning he woke up and soon had reason to be thankful for the prayers that God had answered during the night. Shell fragments had perforated the trousers and the jacket. It was as though a thousand moths had had a field day. A close shave.

Examination of the vehicles that were parked in the street revealed that almost every one had been hit. The message center jeep had been hit in a dozen places and there was a hole as big as a baseball through the radiator. Pfc. Bau?? And Pfc. Salfino took a quick ride out to the burning jeep which had been left on the side of the hill near Sommersdorf. They removed the radiator and reinstalled it in their own jeep. Message center was at least ready to move on. The radio trailer also had been hit and a thousand dollars worth of coils and crystals had been pulverized. Other vehicles had interesting new holes but no damage.

J. FORWARD TO SCHWEINFURT

The advance elements left the town at 1045 and the main body of troops left at 1115. All were happy to get out of the town. The ground was muddy and walking difficult. That day the foot troops marched for 11 long weary miles through seven towns and villages. Everyone asked how much longer would the walking continue and invariably the answer was that pushing on as we did saved lives because it kept the Jerries from digging in and setting up a perimeter of defense.

The troops walked well into the night and then waited for hours in the rain for further orders. When the order came down they were to circle to the north of Schweinfurt and take up positions on the high ground there so as to cut off any possible escape route for the Nazi troops who were being hemmed in on all sides.

At 0920 the next morning the troops finally came to the town of Zell. The medics held sick call and had plenty of men who came in complaining of their feet. A few sniper casualties also came in as did one Jerry casualty 14 years of age.

In the prison cage in Zell there were hundreds of Heine prisoners and every one was astounded at the variety of men. Some youths barely fifteen, some old men, but plenty of well built soldiers.

Toward evening Headquarters company again took off for the athletic field on the hill to the north of Schweinfurt that was to be our home for the next few days. On the way the Heine vehicle that belonged to the wire section burned out a clutch on the way up a steep hill but aside from a few sniper shots the trip was uneventful.

K. REST IN SCHWEINFURT

The 222nd and 242nd had entered the city of Schweinfurt. Other elements of the 232nd had cut off those trying to escape to the north. Except for guard duty in the town and rest, the 1st Battalion had little to do for the moment.

The CP was set up in a white house overlooking the city, and Major Barrett who was with the forward party immediately observed the beautiful bathtub and the easily available hot water. He drew a bath, a luxury he had not enjoyed for a long time. At about 1930 Colonel Custer came up on seeing the bath already drawn stripped off his clothes and stepped in. A few minutes later the Major returned to find the Colonel taking his bath. "You can wash my back," said the Colonel laughing. Whether the Major did so has never been reported.

The sun was warm, the duties light, and the men relaxed. Foraging parties went out to try to salvage some trucks because an order had come down that all captured vehicles were to be inspected and reallocated as needed. The forays yielded some wonderful vehicles that always seemed to have an unfixable something that could easily be repaired if only there was time. A few men were sore because the vehicles on which they had lavished so much labor were taken away from them.

The most shocking news came on the 13th. President Roosevelt was dead. Everyone felt the loss personally. It seemed a shame that at the very moment of our victory our Commander-in-Chief should be taken away from us.

A few of the men took a trip into Schweinfurt to see the ball-bearing works and to eye the girls. The city was a shambles. Death and desolation were everywhere. The city had paid the

full price for resisting to the end.

* * *

VI. PURSUIT TO THE SOUTH

Although the capture of Schweinfurt was a great achievement, because it helped to break the back bone of the German industrial potential, much more remained to be done. Hitler's finest troops, Wehrmacht and SS, were withdrawing to innermost defense area, the so-called "Bavarian Redoubt". The war was already lost for them but they continued a hopeless and fanatical defense. To roust the rats out of their last remaining holes and administer the knockout blow, elements of the 7th Army including the Rainbow Division were ordered south.

A. NEW AREAS TO CONQUER

On the morning of the 14 April, Headquarters Company formed a motorized column for the long trip to the new area. At approximately 1100 the convoy pulled out. It was a glorious spring day. The apple trees were already in bloom and filled the air with their faint fragrance. The men had rested for two days and were in a happy mood. The route led back through Wurzburg and then turned southeast toward Kitzingen. The city did not appear to be badly scarred by war. As truck after truck rolled by, the inhabitants looked but there was little reaction. Adolph Hitler Platz, which was the town square, was untouched. The bake shop had plenty of bread and it was lighter and whiter than the bread that was the German staple article of diet further north. So far the trip was nothing but a picnic.

B. WE FIGHT AGAIN

After passing Kitzingen, the convoy detoured through open fields until a suitable place to cross the Main River was found. They then proceeded southeast again. When the convoy came to the northwest outskirts of Seinsheim it was shelled and everyone immediately detrucked. The picnic was over. The men hit the ditches until the shelling let up and then ran for the protection of the stone walls nearby. Snipers began to fire from the nearby woods. T/5 Underhill of the radio section who had hit the ditch with the other men went back to the radio jeep which had just been perforated by shell fragments and took the radio from the jeep. He came back to where the Colonel was lying and the Colonel held up the advance of Band C companies while one platoon of A company cleared out the snipers. While the snipers were still firing the Colonel stood up to check the exact location of the source of the sniper fire so that he could properly deploy his troops.

It began to rain, a drenching downpour. The men were wet and cold and miserable. This was an area through which the armor had already gone but it looked as though the fighting was only beginning.

When the men moved into town they could see a small memorial cemetery. There were about forty soldiers' graves marked with white birch crosses and a small plaque giving the name and death date of the soldier and the place where he met his well-deserved fate. The great majority had died in Russia, a few in France, and a few at sea. The town was a tiny one and the

war mortality rate was terrific. From the way the fighting was going they would soon have to expand the cemetery.

The men who had taken shelter in the barn reported that they had found cartons marked with American Red Cross labels. The owner of the stable was sought out and he explained that the packages belonged to PWs who had left the cartons. The story could not be proved one way or the other and he was permitted to go.

The rain was still coming down in torrents but the convoy pulled out toward Ippesheim. The wire party which had been following the foot troops went into one house in order to hang an overhead from the eaves of the house. "Skoop" Niewold came out with two ancient model horse pistols as souvenirs. Some Polish laborers who were in the town reported that five dead Americans were in the fields a short distance from town. A jeep was sent out and the body of one American soldier who had been dead five days, was found. The townspeople had dug a grave and had moved the body to it but they had not buried the soldier because they didn't know what to do with the identification tags. The Graves Registration officer was notified of the situation.

C. REUSCH TO BEROLZHEIM

The convoy continued on without incident until it arrived in the town of Reusch at about 1700. The company had traveled 65 miles that day and the men were tired. The town was fairly well set up. A reception committee composed of local yokels sat on a fence and gaped at the Americans until the Burgomeister ordered them home. The men were cold and wet and happy to have some place to stay for the night. While waiting for billets to be secured one group lit a fire in a barn that was full of straw and risked burning the place down just to keep warm.

Finally everyone went to bed except the CP personnel. Upon investigation it appeared that there was not room in the CP building for everyone to sleep so the CP was moved to another house on the side of a hill at about 2300. A few hours later a few shells fell in the vicinity but few of the men even heard them.

The next morning dawned cold and windy. The sky was overcast but at least it was not raining. In order to cross the stream that ran at the edge of the town the engineers had to build a bridge. At 0830 the men moved across the bridge into the open country beyond. It was bitterly cold and getting colder all the time. At one stop the men learned that the straw, used to cover the beets which were piled up in dirt heaps, would burn. Soon there was a rousing fire, but because of the penetrating wind only one side of the body could be warmed at a time and there were a lot of men around the fire. Most stayed cold.

To the northwest of Herbolzheim parts of a vehicle lay on the right side of the road. The parts of the motor appeared to be those of a German vehicle. It had hit a mine and the wreckage was strewn around for fifty yards. Whether the vehicle had been part of an American convoy or of a German convoy could not be ascertained. On the road were bundles of faggots which the tanks that had preceded the infantry had put there to warn of mines. The convoy thereupon took to the fields until it reached the outskirts of the town. A jeep went ahead to explore the town before the convoy moved in. They saw a town that seemed to have suffered some sort of catastrophic blow. Dead animals were all over the street. The houses were wrecked and still smoking.

A PW who was found in the town told the story of the destruction of Herbolzheim. There

had been about a dozen German soldiers in the town and our artillery had lobbed a few shells in to dislodge them. A squadron of P 47's was flying over the town at the time and their mission obviously was to bomb targets of opportunity. They saw some artillery shells landing in the town and decided to cooperate with the ground forces. When they were finished, the town had been wiped off the map. Only a few civilians escaped. Hundreds of animals of all kinds were killed. It was not a pretty sight.

Finding no enemy in the town the convoy proceeded onward to Humprechtsau. This town also had been pretty badly scarred up. The armored elements had done a good job. A CP was set up for a short time but the column soon moved on.

At 1430 the convoy pulled into Berbolzheim. The town was peaceful. The last German troops had pulled out two days before, at which time a group of six German armored vehicles had passed through the town going south, according to the Polish slave laborers. The kitchen set up their equipment in a garage and served hot chow. But the medics had ideas of their own about chow. It was in Berbolzheim that Capt. Allen first tasted the famous Nelson "flapjacks militaires." As made that memorable evening, the recipe was 'flour - ten cups; ground wheat - 1 cup, salt - to taste, sugar - all that was available, butter - 1 teaspoonful baking powder - 5 tablespoons full, eggs - 15, and milk - sufficient to make a batter of proper consistency. The 15 eggs were pure guesswork but it was a nice number and there weren't any more. It has been reported from reliable sources that the flapjacks were excellent.

Next morning a few of the men who could speak Polish questioned the Polish workers. There were five men and six women. A rather delicate problem which no doubt would later involve a serious headache for the AMG came out in the discussion. Three of the girls had had children by German father. In two cases, the fathers were willing to marry the girls but this had been prohibited by German law. The girls were employed as farm laborers at the magnificent salary of 24 marks a month. Their babies had been taken away from them and boarded out with foster parents because the girls had to work from dawn till dark and could not care for their children. In one case the girl had to pay 30 marks a month for the care of the child. These difficulties did not trouble them. What they wanted to know was whether they would be permitted to take their children with them when they went back to Poland. Under German law they were Germans and could not be taken to Poland. This was no problem for fighting men so they we told that soon the AMG would set up in the nearest large town and that they could then take their problems to them. Fighting the enemy was easy compared to this.

D. IPSHEIM TO BRONNAMBERG

At about 1130 the convoy again took to the road in a southeasterly direction and proceeded to the outskirts of Ipsheim. Here the foot troops rested in a wheat field and the warm sun felt wonderful to them. The medics and the CP group proceeded into the town square and there awaited further orders. The first sergeant sat in a doorway and the sun put him to sleep. Soon he lay stretched out on the sidewalk snoring. Other men took a few pictures around the town. While the A & P platoon waited they diverted themselves by catching a large white gander and pinning a Nazi Swastika around his neck. They tried to put his wings on top of his head to indicate that he wanted to surrender but they were unsuccessful. Finally an old woman called the gander by name and he waddles away under the barn to escape.

When the orders came through the company was told that they were now in reserve and

would stay in the town that night. Billets were found that had beds for every man. Soft white beds. Luxury. The kitchen set up in a school house and served hot chow for supper. The men thought that they would get a good night's rest but they should have known better. The hardest fighting had always been done when the company was supposedly in reserve or in a "nice quiet sector" and the next few days were to prove that this was no exception to the usual experience for the company.

At 0200 everyone was alerted to move. At 0300 the motorized convoy moved out of town toward Neustadt. The men were sleepy and little can be remembered of the trip between Ipsheim and Neustadt. After passing through Neustadt the convoy turned south to the little town of Herrnneuses which was the line of departure for the day. The orders were to follow behind the 2nd Battalion which was the spearhead the drive. Although it was still dark when the convoy reached Herrnneuses it was so cold that in spite of blackout restrictions the men lit bonfires made from bundles of dried fir which were found along the road. The line troops left the town about 0700 but the motorized convoy did not leave until later. Members of the Intelligence section had taken off in the Colonel's jeep in order to reconnoiter the area to the left and had gotten stuck in the mud as had two anti-tank guns. When they returned, the motor convoy took off in a westerly direction. The route led across fields and was extremely rough.

In the meantime the foot elements had passed through the town of Schellert where Regiment was located and Pfc Burke had been bawled out for walking in the center of the road with the Colonel instead of walking on the side of the road and keeping proper interval. As always even the proximity of Regiment brought out severe cases of "chicken". As the troops moved along the road, however, they saw a sight that made a reprimand seem like a trivial thing. A civilian car had been hit and two burned bodies in the car had had the entire upper portion burned away and the charred skeleton still signaled a left turn although the spinal vertebrae were plainly visible. The other body was hideously burned around the legs.

The road continued rugged, being mostly across country, along back trails and tracks made by armor. A creek was crossed in the vicinity of Wilhermsdorf and there the motor columns lost for a short time. However the motor highway was soon found by a patrol. A few wrecked American tanks and half tracks were on the road leading to the next stopping place. Convoys from three directions converged at Gonnorsdorf and accommodations in the town were poor. For a time the men thought that they would have to sleep in a hay loft but all eventually found accommodations. While the men waited for accommodations to be found for them they soaked their feet in a nearby stream. The road had been rough and the men had walked a long way. The mess hall had a special treat that night. Milk had been procured and as much as a man wanted he could have.

Sleep was a problem that night. The artillery kept shooting all night long at Furth and Numberg. It was the heaviest concentration of artillery that the men had ever heard in action. Off in the distance the flash of exploding shells was plainly visible. Furth was catching hell.

The next morning was clear and much warmer. The men started out to walk toward Cadolzburg and again spirits were much brighter. As the men left the town they could see a 155 that was still in position to the left of the road. The march was uneventful until the outskirts of Cadolzburg were reached. There a castle rose precipitously from the road, its stone battlements now crowned with fiery flaming crest, the result of the shelling of the previous nights. Below the castle a number of women were drawing water from a pond, to quench the fire that was burning the roof of their house. The castle had been a Hitler youth center but not much remained of it

except the outer walls.

The road wound up beside the castle and continued through the medieval town. There were excellent shops on both sides of the street and there was every indication of affluence and wealth. The company did not stop here however but continued through the town in march formation. At the other end of the town the road dropped sharply permitting a good view of the surrounding countryside including the blazing city of Nurnmberg.

The route continued along the highway for a little distance and then went across the open fields to the town of Bronnamberg. The town of Bronnamberg was dirty, the houses old, the facilities were poor. It was a place to rest, however, and the men found billets in the available houses. The kitchen set up in a bar. D company which was encamped at the outskirts of town set up their kitchen just across the road and the men were assured of a good meal in at least one of the kitchens.

There were a few snipers in the woods to the right of the town but these were soon taken care of by men from D company. The house in which Communications platoon stayed had an excellent library of erotic literature and the men enjoyed the pictures even though they couldn't read the words. The prize item in the collection was a folio of nudes by leading German photographers. These the first sergeant acquired by virtue of his rank.

E. LEICHENDORF TO UNTER-ASBACH

On the morning of the 20th the company moved to Leichendorf where one of the companies had previously set up. The Communications platoon had already had one adventure in Leichendorf the previous day. A wire party had gone forward to lay wire to the companies. Pfc. Kania had climbed up a pole to check the commercial line which was being used instead of GI wire. The wire jeep was parked between two tanks which were sitting just below the crest of the hill. Shells had been coming in intermittently all the time but not too close. Suddenly a shell whistled by just a few feet from the pole on which Kania was perched. He came down in one slide and hit the dirt. With that, the radio jeep came up, and the occupants saw everyone in the dirt with their guns ready and started to laugh. "What are you doing?" asked the radio man, "picking daisies?" A few machine gun rounds came in about that time and the radio men also piled out of the jeeps in a hurry. They then radioed back describing the situation and took off.

When the company moved in on the 20th, however, all was quiet. The town lay on a lovely little stream. The concrete bridge leading into the main part of town had been de-mined. About 500 pounds of dynamite had been taken out. As the convoy moved in, an antitank gun crew was sitting drinking beer next to their gun which was ideally situated in a beer garden. The CP was set up in a house next to the stream. A few of the men obtained fish hooks and went fishing. It all added up to a nice pastoral scene.

As usual however there were disturbing elements. A detail of men took the dynamite into a nearby field and detonated it. The tiles on the nearby roofs sailed through the air and the explosion scared hell out of everyone. Sgt. Grebe of the Ranger platoon was shot. Another case of an unloaded pistol. During the night the artillery continued to shell Furth. A dozen Krauts in civilian clothes were picked up.

The event of the day however was that the company was paid in German marks for the first time. What they were going to do with the money the men did not know but it was nice to have it anyway and many of the men made out money order applications so that they could send

the money home.

On the outskirts of the town a brick factory was located. Two men from the Communications platoon investigated and found thousands of cases of fuses for artillery shells. This obviously was a storage depot for the area.

The company pulled out the next morning at about 0930. The troops were on foot but as usual most of Headquarters company rode their vehicles. The line companies in front of the convoy ran into trouble at one place and as a result the convoy waited for hours while the artillery passed by to go to their support. The men built fires along the road and rested.

The convoy pulled in Kapsdorf at 2100 and set up a CP in a beer tavern. The civilians were of course sent out of the house. The men brought in a German civilian who was dressed in a fancy black uniform and who turned out to be a railroad worker. Reports came in the line companies were running into determined resistance. A few shells fell in the town. Then it began to rain; a heavy down pour but of short duration.

The resistance that was being encountered now was quite different from that above Nurnberg. There the Wehrmacht had turned and fled at our approach. Here they fought till the last moment and then retreated to fight again in a determined rear guard action.

After being in town only half an hour the company again moved out. The convoy traveled directly south to Wassermangenu which was reached at 2200. The bridge across the river was impassable to vehicles and the company spent the night in this town. Engineers worked on a Bailey bridge all night. There was some anti-aircraft fire during the night. Everyone was trigger happy.

The next morning, the 22nd, again on foot, again forward,. Foot troops left early. The second echelon left at 1000. The foot troops got their feet wet crossing the river because the bridge had not yet been completed. The route lay in a southwesterly direction. Coming to the town of Erbach the convoy saw the body of a young girl stretched out on the left side of the road. Nearby lay a milk pitcher. The story, as nearly as can be pieced together, from information gathered from the inhabitants of the town, was that the 12-year-old girl had gone to get milk. When she was returning from the milk house a group of SS troopers passed along the road. They were fleeing from the advancing American forces. She made some comment and one of the Nazis emptied a clip of ammunition from a machine pistol into her.

In Erbach the CP was set up in a school house. It began to hail. A number of prisoners including one SS trooper were brought in and were taken back to Regiment with one of the message center jeeps. All the men wanted to take the SS trooper out and lose him in a ditch but he was turned over with the others.

As we were waiting in Erbach, General Linden came up and instructed Col. Custer to go forward at once with all possible speed.

In the cold drizzle the convoy once again took off through the woods for Grafensteinberg, the next town. A little sniper fire was encountered at the outskirts of the town but the column was only momentarily delayed. They crossed the clearing in which the town lay and again entered a heavily wooded area.

As they emerged from the woods a Nazi soldier on horseback came out of a clump of bushes to the left of the road and tried to escape. Although the whole column took pot shots at him, there was only one bullet hole in him when he was found. A short time later the TDs swung into action and knocked out two of the wagons that were sighted coming out of the woods to the right front. The other wagon succeeded in escaping into the woods. The TDs shelled the woods

but without effect. Another target for the T Ds guns was a German staff car with five officers in it. The car received a direct hit killing or wounding all the officers.

A ranger patrol went ahead of the column to the town of Unter-Asbach. There they captured the bridge across the Altmuhl River intact. This sensational feat cut off at least a Battalion of German troops who intended to retreat across the bridge. But even more important it provided a direct route south for other troops and for supplies thus facilitating the rapid pursuit of the enemy. The capture of the bridge was a simple operation according to the man who did the job.

About 1830 a patrol led by Sgt. Johnson together with several machine gun crews from D company went out to reconnoiter the bridge and if possible capture it. As they approached the bridge German troops were coming to blow it up. A fire fight ensued in which the Heines were fought off and the bridge secured. A large amount of dynamite was found under the bridge.

The motorized column, which as usual was a second serial, came into Dornhausen late in the evening after it had started to rain. They took shelter in the houses for about an hour until a guide came back to lead them around the mines which had been planted in the road. They arrived in Unter-Asbach about midnight.

About forty prisoners were picked up at Dornhausen, the town to the east of Unter-Asbach. Cpl. Jackson was assigned the job of marching them to Unter-Asbach and on the road met up with a strange incident. Our trucks were momentarily parked along the road when Cpl Jackson marched by with his prisoners. There, on the side of the road, he saw a Kraut with a loaded panzerfaust. Why the Jerry had not shot at the trucks is a problem in Nazi psychology. He was taken prisoner without resistance.

The men who slept in Unter-Asbach got what sleep they could. A few shells landed in town. One of the service company drivers was optimistic about the amount of cognac that was needed to keep him warm and had to be taken care of. The T Ds were parked in a field across the highway from the CPo. For a few hours there was not much activity in this town.

F. BITTENHEIM TO BUCKDORF

While the second serial was coming up, forward elements had pushed on in order to secure the bridgehead which they had won. The Colonel was unable to communicate with Regiment to get permission to advance at the time, but did so on his own initiative.

The line troops were so far out ahead of scheduled progress that friendly troops, mistaking them for Germans, ordered artillery to open up on them. They were pinned down on the other side of the bridge until the Colonel could get word to the artillery to cease fire. The order to proceed was then confirmed by higher headquarters. At this time the troops were surrounded on three sides by the enemy and were miles in advance of supporting troops on the flanks. Their advance was held up for about two hours by mine fields and sniper fire but at last they won their way into Dittensheim where they spent the night.

The next morning the rear group moved forward to Dittensheim. The motor convoy was compelled to follow a different route than that taken by the foot troops because the bridge across the railroad had been knocked out and they had to find an underpass which made a considerable detour necessary. On the road they saw a dead Kraut lying on the road dressed in an American uniform which was complete except that he wore Heine shoes.

When the column arrived in Dittensheim, the foot troops had already pushed forward.

The pace at which the troops were driving had been accelerated at the Colonel's order and there was no pause for rest. After a short wait the motorized column also took to the road.

The remainder of the day was so full that it is necessary to recount the incidents involving the foot troops and the forward CP separately from those which involved the motorized rear column.

The troops advanced from Dittenheim to Wolfbrunn without incident. After passing Wolfbrunn, the road ran up hill through the woods and the Jerries had blown the road out. They received some artillery fire while in the woods here but proceeded onward. They came out of the woods onto the high level plateau and there received additional shelling. The TDs engaged a Tiger tank which the Germans set afire and abandoned. The troops proceeded onward toward Auemheim but turned west just before entering the town. A patrol that was sent forward to investigate had reported the town clear. Three of the men in the CP group noticed a number of Heines in some bushes about 700 yards directly to the front. All fired at them and the Heines came out waving white handkerchiefs.

The troops proceeded about 200 yards westward and encountered a mine field. They went around the mine field through the muddy plowed ground until they reached the small hamlet of Schlittenhart. There Cpl. Joy, who was with the wire-laying party, fell from a jeep and injured his leg. The advance again turned sharply south and immediately ran into sniper fire. The TDs which had gone ahead ran into machine gun and mortar fire and one of them, in backing up ran over a jeep and crushed the front end in. The troops waited for about an hour while our artillery shelled the town of Deckingen. It was decided that the best procedure would be to flank the town. B and C companies were ordered to go around the left flank. A group of snipers were encountered and D company men moved forward and eliminated them. The CP group held up to wait for the troops to clear the town. They encountered heavy resistance however and were ordered to withdraw. A smoke barrage was laid in to cover their withdrawal.

Colonel Custer ordered the town laid flat as soon as our men were safely out of the way.

Through an error, however, one platoon of C company moved forward into the town and after a sharp battle ousted the Heines. The artillery was therefore asked to lay down a U-shaped barrage as the other troops moved into town to support the platoon from C company. The maneuver was successful. The Heines withdrew and our troops moved into the town of Deckingen.

An advance party from Regiment came up and wanted to know what had delayed the advance and why our Battalion was not going forward faster. As they were speaking, the Heines began to shell the town. The conversation was soon terminated and the Regimental party departed like a "bat out of hell".

The rear column left Unter-Ansbach at about 1000. Coming into Wolfbrunn it began to rain. Shortly thereafter the convoy had to stop because the road was impassable to vehicles at the place where it went up the side of the mountain and the Heines had blown a large hole in it. The engineers came forward with power saws and cut away the felled tree and everyone pitched in to fill up the hole in the road. After about two hours of labor the trucks and jeeps continued up the hill. Captain Alpert's jeep burned out a clutch and couldn't make the hill. The vehicle was left with the maintenance crew while the rest of the convoy went ahead until they reached the outskirts of Auemheim. There the convoy stopped to await further orders. The time was 1430. It had stopped raining and the weather had cleared up considerably. To the left front was a very tall church steeple which appeared to be "looking down our throats". The convoy was spread out

on the road at intervals of about 20 yards between vehicles. The vehicles, however, were without any cover whatsoever and were silhouetted against the skyline.

A detachment of medics had gone into Auernheim to set up an aid station and had treated several first battalion casualties. There were no regular troops there, however.

About two hours passed and the men wiled away the time talking. Some built fires and ate K rations. Reports were coming in over the radio about the fire fights that B and C company were having and on several occasions the station that was with the rear convoy acted as relay station to get reports back to Regiment.

Some of the men saw a few Heines sneak from the woods on the left and go in the direction of the town. The distance was about a thousand yards, however, and no one fired at them. Captain Alpert asked for a volunteer patrol to go into the town but they could find nothing. A few of them stayed in town to protect the aid station.

About half an hour later the Jerries began to shell the convoy with what sounded like 75's. Everyone dispersed into the field getting as far away from the vehicles as possible. One volley of about four rounds was quickly followed by another. Then there was a short pause. A third volley came in and one of the men in the anti-tank platoon was hit. A shout went up, "Medics, Medics." Capt. Allen, who was lying on the ground about thirty yards away, took off toward the wounded men going over the broken ground like a football player through strong opposition. The shells continued to fly as he ran but he continued on. When he reached Pfc. Jepson's side, it was too late, the man was dead.

The firing, which had been all too accurate and which the men thought was directed from the church steeple in the town, ended soon thereafter. Capt. Alpert requested and received permission to move the convoy away from the position they were in. After what seemed an interminable time, Pfc. Zalfino came back to guide the convoy around the mine fields and into Dockingen.

Like many another grim incident, this one was not without comic relief. Pfc. Wirsing had been off behind the bushes when the shells began to come in. He headed for the tall timber without stopping to wipe himself when the shells started to fly and then needed new underwear. Then there was the hunt for one of the men who had gotten so far from the scene of the shelling that he couldn't be found when it became time to load up on the trucks. The medics too had a funny incident. When the shelling started the men were sitting in the ambulance heating C rations. The first shell that landed put a few holes in the ambulance. Pfc. Sommers popped out of the ambulance and ran 15 to 20 yards with the can of C rations in his hand and before he realized he still had it. When a momentary lull occurred, he saw the can and dropped it. He took off for a nearby cellar in a farmhouse. Later investigation showed that the ambulance had been pretty well shot up.

The motorized convoy proceeded into Dockingen. The town smelled of white phosphorus but there was no action and the men were grateful to get into shelter. Even when the rear echelon came in there were still a few men on the road having troubles.

Captain Alpert's jeep had burned out a clutch and it was being towed by the maintenance truck which already had a one-ton trailer in back and now had a jeep with trailer in addition. When this omnibus hit the road block, it couldn't make the grade up the hill and the trailers had to be shuttled up one at a time. When this job was complete, the maintenance crew had to back and pick up a three-quarter ton kitchen trailer that had overturned. The trailer belonged to D company and had turned over in the soft mud when the convoy had to leave the road because it

was mined. Hot cake batter was spilled all over the field. With the aid of a block and tackle the trailer was pulled upright. By this time it was 0200. Pfc. Rotfus was posted in the woods to prevent any surprise attacks by snipers and he stood there and shivered in the cold. S/Sgt Thomas put on a sleeping bag and walked around in it. But there still remained the problem of getting the jeep and small trailer as well as the three-quarter ton trailer through the mud. Finally, a guard was left with the vehicles and a two and a half ton truck was obtained which pulled the jeep and trailer through the mud to the road again. It was beginning to be light when the maintenance crew pulled into town.

Even in the town, however, there was to be no peace that night. A few mortar rounds came in but Lt. Crane told the men they could rest easy. They were our own artillery shooting at the enemy, he said. Next morning, however, he stepped of the doorway and there was a fragment of Heine mortar shell as big as a fist with Heine markings on the fragment.

Somewhere along the line the Battalion had been taken out of reserve. It may have been that it was never formally committed, the Heines having done that for us. Be that as it may, the men were again informed that now they were in reserve. This time positively.

The convoy, now totally mechanized, moved out of Dockingen in the afternoon. The day was cold and dreary. There were frequent stops during which fires were built so the men could keep warm. During one of these stops, five Heines walked out of the woods and surrendered. Shortly before dusk the convoy pulled into Otting and there waited for further orders.

While the convoy waited, a fire was made and a group of officers and men were clustered around it trying to keep warm. Suddenly a plane was heard overhead and machine guns shot up at it. Everyone sprinted for cover. Captain Alpert ran for the nearby barn but tripped and did a swan dive into a sump full of manure drainage. Up to his neck in trouble, the Captain hoisted himself out dripping and forlorn. A hurry call was sent out for dry clothing and the Captain divested himself of the barnyard-odored uniform and put on the new. He was ribbed by all the other officers and by the Chaplain who offered to punch his T.S. card twice.

It got to be dark and still there were no orders. The fires were put out and it became colder and colder. Finally the men were told to mount up again and the convoy proceeded.

Shortly before dawn the convoy entered the outskirts of Monheim and stopped next to a lumber yard and factory. The men waited until it was light then made fires to warm themselves and heat the K rations. Afterwards some went exploring. They found that the factory had produced parts for planes. Among the things found were wooden mock-ups for jet-propelled planes and many beautiful wood-working machines.

After a time, the slave laborers in town found the convoy. They had practically taken over the town and one of them went down the line passing out cigars to the Americans who had liberated them. Another showed some of the men where they could get hot showers. A third took a group of men into the factory commissary and cut steaks off a carcass for them. A house was taken over for a temporary CP and in a few minutes the steaks were on the fire. A Polish Colonel rode down the line of trucks on a bicycle. He had a full flowing beard and spoke a little English. He was overjoyed to be free again.

About **1100** the convoy left Monheim and proceeded in the direction of Itzing, a town which was already occupied by Regiment and other troops. A bridge had been blown out and further progress was impossible. The convoy was therefore deployed in a field just short of the town to await the repair of the bridge. The kitchen was moved up and prepared a hot meal for the men.

In the late afternoon the bridge was put in and the convoy again moved forward. The line companies moved forward on foot because the artillery trucks on which they had been riding were sent back.

They proceeded across the open terrain toward Baierfeld and ran into heavy sniper fire. The ensuing fire fight resulted in eleven casualties which the medics treated in a first aid station that they set up in the town. Artillery was called in and the rifle companies took shelter in the houses while the artillery shelled the surrounding woods. Finally the TDs combed the woods and rooted out the remaining Krauts.

After the fire fight, the companies and headquarters company went on to Buckdorf. They were joined in the town by both Regiment and Division. In effect, this was the culmination of the first phase of the mopping up operation in the south. The men were grouped in an assembly area for the final push across the Danube and south into the mountains.

VII. THE FINAL DRIVE

The gigantic rat race continued on ever southward. By every device that was available to them, the Germans delayed the pursuit. They blew bridges, mined the roads and fields, fought desperate little delaying actions, but their time was running short.

A. Crossing the Danube

The company did not tarry long at Buckdorf. On the morning of the 25th, the troops moved out on foot because the roads were mined. After proceeding south they arrived at the town of Leitheim shortly before noon. The company had been scheduled to cross the Danube at 1300 but after moving up to the bridge crossing, it was necessary to move back because the bridge had been shelled. The day was warm and sunny. The wait was to be of unknown duration. The men made themselves comfortable. The scissors and shears were dug out and some of the men got haircuts. A few men obtained hot meals from the 122nd Medical Battalion which was also stationed in town.

From the terrace of a large house that overlooked the entire Danube Valley to the south, it was possible to observe both the river and our artillery shelling the enemy positions on the other side. It was really a grand stand seat and every shell that went over could be traced by the puff of smoke that it made when it landed. In the distance, the town of Rain was burning and other smaller towns on the plain were being shelled. The shelling was not all by our own guns. About 1700 a few shells whistled in from across the river and hit one of the jeeps belonging to the artillery outfit. Several men were killed. A short time before a jet-propelled plane had come over and machine guns had let loose at it but without success.

The men who stood upon the terrace and looked out upon the Danube, shared the disappointment of many other GIs. The Danube was not blue, it did not look very romantic, it was pretty enough but certainly the adjective "beautiful" overstated the case.

At 1600 the column again moved out to a point southeast of Altisheim. There the men had another long wait before they were able to cross the bridge. It was growing dark and observation of the artillery firing was excellent from the north side of the Danube. As night fell the column again moved down the road toward the pontoon bridge.

A German plane came over and our machine guns opened up as did the other machine

guns in the vicinity. The plane crashed in flames some distance away but of course the men in the convoy went on across a field that had been plowed up by armored vehicles and turned into the bridge approach. All vehicles passed over the bridge safely and continued on up a winding road to the left. The column stopped when it had gotten a sufficient distance from the bridge and a quartering party went forward to locate sleeping quarters in the little hamlet just in front.

A second plane came over and everyone piled out of the vehicles and dashed into the fields. Again machine guns and anti-aircraft guns opened up from all directions. The plane was hit and crashed on a hill to the north of the Danube, scattering burning wreckage over a large area. The men cheered enthusiastically. It was not till several days later that they learned that American gunners had shot down one of our own planes.

When the men returned to the trucks they saw S/Sgt Greuel lying flat on his back, moaning. His companions ran up thinking that he had been shot and were relieved to see him struggle to a sitting position. In jumping from the truck his foot had hit a box of ammunition which had fallen on him as he hit the grass. He was badly bruised but not seriously hurt.

The convoy moved into the courtyard of a large farm and the house and huge barn were used for quarters for the night. The next morning the sun shone. A few bottles of wine had been found. Eggs, too. The men ate and rested. Meanwhile, several members of the Intelligence section had gone out on a reconnoitering party and had captured four 120 mm mortars and hundreds of rounds of ammunition. Toward noontime the men were instructed to mount their vehicles and the convoy again went forward.

The vehicles proceeded until they came to the Lech River. Here the bridge was still under construction and the convoy was deployed in the fields to wait. When the bridge was repaired other convoys had priority over ours and the wait became a prolonged one.

Nearby was a small stream with clear but icy water. The men had not had a bath for weeks. The sun was shining. A good number of the men stripped off their clothes and bathed. The ones who were not so hardy washed their feet.

As the company waited they saw an unending stream of armored vehicles go by. Tanks, armored cars, prime movers, scout cars, some large and some small, but all moving forward in front of us. It was an encouraging sight.

Finally it came our turn to cross the bridge. The sky darkened, the wind came up, the rains came, then we started across the bridge and moved without incident to Feldheim.

B. FELDHEIM TO ALLACH

In Feldheim the officers had a lucky break. There were three French girls in town who were working on the farms and who out of gratitude for their liberation prepared a meal for some of the officers. The girls were pretty too.

The company did not dally long in the town, however. Orders came through at midnight that we were to move out as soon as the companies could be assembled. The entire battalion left the town about 0200. The rain had stopped but the roads were very muddy.

The route led almost directly south and the trip was uneventful. Units of the 20th Armored Division had preceded us and there was no fighting for our battalion to do although there was ample evidence, on all sides, of the fighting that the other outfits had done.

At 0830 in the morning the company pulled into Weisenbach, a town that the 222nd Infantry has just vacated. In front of the message center building lay a nice Heine, very dead.

He was the only member of his squad who wanted to put up a fight. His comrades had willingly permitted him to do so. After he was shot, they all surrendered.

Near a crossroads were two large German busses that had been hit. The road was littered with equipment. Even when mounted on vehicles, the Germans could not run fast enough to escape our motorized units.

Aside from the fact that a record number of eggs was requisitioned, there was little of importance that occurred.

On the afternoon of the next day, the 28th the men mounted on artillery vehicles and made the long jump to Gartenstaut. Hundreds of prisoners were on the roads. Whole convoys of German vehicles had given themselves up and were parked in the field. The German troops that were trudging to the rear included the German equivalent of our Wacs and men of all ages. The Jerries were surrendering wholesale despite the exhortations of their leaders to fight to the last man.

The convoy pulled into Gertenstaut at 1700 and found that other troops including our artillery were already in the town. Headquarters company therefore walked to Warthausen, a nearby village in the 242nd regiment area. After getting permission to stay there, billets were secured.

Russian and Polish prisoners told the men that the villagers had mistreated seven American flyers who had parachuted from a burning plane. According to their story, the airmen were beaten with sticks and one of them had been killed. A few of the men took off post haste to find the Burgomeister but he had hidden somewhere and could not be found.

The Ranger and anti-tank platoons posted security around the town and the other men went to sleep.

The next morning about 0700, the company walked back to Gartensstaut, where Regiment was already quartered. On the way, they saw some new Nazi vehicles, one of them a large munitions carrier which had only gone 500 kilometers. The only thing wrong with these vehicles was that they had run out of gas and had to be abandoned.

The town was jammed full of troops. Radio section was quartered in a fire house, some of the other sections in barns. One of the men arranged for some to sleep in the local church. This proved to be unnecessary, however, because the company did not stay in the town overnight.

During the wait here, the message center jeep went on a run to one of the companies and captured two beautiful German WACS. They also encountered a group of 40 SS troopers along the road. They were not brought in because they were all dead. It was obvious that they had been lined up and mowed down.

At 1600 the men mounted on service company trucks and the first echelon of the convoy moved out on the road. The route lay southeast, after a long but pleasant trip, the men arrived in Allach, a suburb on the northwest outskirts of Munich.

C. IRRESISTIBLE FORCE MEETS IMMOVABLE OBJECT

The second echelon pulled out an hour after the first and ran into a series of misadventures that they will long remember. The serial was made up of heavy vehicles including Tds and troop carriers.

All went well until they reached a stream to the northwest of Aichach. The heavy trucks went across the bridge but the third, an anti-tank vehicle, caved in the bridge and the gun barely

made it to the other side. The rest of the convoy therefore had to make a long detour to find another bridge.

It was getting dark when the convoy was finally reassembled and continued on its way. They were travelling along a narrow one-way road surrounded on both sides by swampy peat bogs when they ran head on into an armored convoy consisting of thirty halftrucks. All of these vehicles had trailers and could not be backed up. Our trucks all had trailers and did not dare get off the road for fear of sinking on the soft ground on either side of the road.

The Captain in charge of the armored vehicles refused to back his vehicles. Our trucks couldn't back up if they wanted to. The Captain stated that he had been on the road previously and that there was a cut-off near the tail end of our convoy into which our vehicles might drive. If this were done he would be able to by-pass our vehicles. Since he outranked any member of our convoy this suggestion, although it seemed impracticable, was accepted. Four of our vehicles pulled off the road across an open field. An anti-tank truck got hung on a log. A tank destroyer got stuck, threw a track and burned out a clutch. A second tank destroyer moved behind the first one and threw a track trying to get it out. The troop carriers and the kitchen trucks remained on the road. The officers in charge of the tank destroyers cursed and swore.

The armored vehicles began to pull around the parked vehicles in our convoy. The first half-track got stuck and began to spin its treads but only succeeded in sinking deeper. A second armored vehicle tried to pull the first out. A third armored vehicle attempted to pull the other two out, and all three were stuck in the mud.

Our troops dismounted and proceeded to Allach on foot. The troop carriers, without any load, attempted and succeeded in getting through.

The officers of both convoys had a conference. Our officers told the Captain in charge of the armored vehicles that it wouldn't do him any good to get by our vehicles because the bridge was caved in. He asked how he could get across and was told that no one gave a damn how he got across.

The scramble was untangled about 0200 in the morning but the troubles of the motor officer were not over.

The kitchen trucks went about 600 to 700 yards and saw what had been a small hole in the road but which was not a yawning cavern after 30 half-trucks had gone through it. A kitchen trailer got hung up. The rest of the convoy left it there after a truck got stuck trying to get it out. Lt. Lanzen came back to find out what was the matter and the maintenance crew bedded down near the stalled vehicles till dawn. They finally winched the trailer and truck across the hole. When these vehicles finally arrived in Allach they were met by Pfc Hodge, who had waited all night so he could guide the vehicles to their proper destination.

E. A SIGHT SEEING TOUR

In Allach the situation was a happier one. Quarters were wonderful. Many had hot baths for the first time in weeks. There was an abundance of wine. The news was excellent and everyone was cheerful.

Two truckloads of men were permitted to visit Dachau, the concentration camp, which was about ten miles away. The story of Dachau has been told in other places. The horror of Nazi brutality will live long in the memories of those who saw the crematory, the living dead men who were prisoners, the hospital where they experimented, the electric fence, and the instruments of

Nazi torture. The men learned why the very word Dachau would blanch the faces of people all over Europe. To those who saw these sights the excuse that seems to be the stock answer of Germans, "I did not know what went on" is a hollow mockery.

At 1330 the next morning the convoy left Allach. The route passed through
[upper left and lower right edges of page are missing]

... To be suffering from a hangover. Bottles of
as they passed through the streets. Men and
looting the shops. Everyone seemed happy as a lark. .. the streets.

Stopped at a small suburb in the southeast suburbs of Munich. Community and here again accommodations were excellent. A [blanket of snow had fallen] during the night clothing the trees crystal white The kitchen ... had hot meals. All was peaceful and quiet.

.... at 1330 we were on the move again. The men rode on the tank [for] the trip to Zorneding was uneventful. At Zorneding the company ... [had] to sleep in the woods. Regiment was in town as was the 2nd Battalion. Headquarters company received permission to stay in the town. Orders changed however and the whole battalion moved up to the next town which was [Jacob-Neuh]arting.

The trip continued the next afternoon. Again the men mounted the Tds and proceeded to Jacob-Neuharting. They arrived at 1630 and the whole company stayed at a large hotel. These stops were but interludes in the trip south.

Next morning the company continued on to Aendorf which was 40 miles away, stayed overnight and went on to Kay.

The entire trip from Allach to Kay was a sight-seeing tour. There was no action. The rolling countryside was beautiful. The men were touring Bavaria at the government's expense. Of course, it wasn't deluxe touring but it was interesting.

The company arrived in Kay at 1500 after a 20-mile trip from Aendorf and soon found billets. A day was spent clearing up and then the "Chicken" associated with non-combat duties began. A training schedule was made up. The men did athletic exercises in the field and marched up and down to the entertainment of the inhabitants. Equipment was taken care of and regularly inspected. Were it not for the snow-capped mountains in the background the men could easily have imagined themselves back at Camp Gruber.

The days passed quickly. The hour glass had run out and with it Germany's destiny. On 7 May 1945 an official announcement was made that Germany [s uncon]ditional surrender would be effective 0001, 8 May 1945.

That night the Fluffy Duffy boys put on a special program with ... orchestra and many barrels of beer. The war in Europe was won... celebrate. It was time to spit and polish brass and learn once ... barracks soldier. It was time to wonder, "Where do we go from here?" ... things did not matter to the men. The heat of battle had ... from the boys and everyone was evaluated at his true worth ... soldier.

It was also time to take stock of the cost and to ... tune. There had been only 4 killed, 4 missing in action .. and 4 with non-battle injuries during our whole campaign ... Headquarters Company.

From the pen of the Battalion Commander came the ... prized more than the ribbons that they had won. On .. the order of the day was read to the company.